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POLITICAL




THINKERS






OF

MODERN INDIA

1 RAJA RAMMOHAN ROY





EDITED BY
VERINDER GROVER

RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY

(POLITICAL THINKERS OF MODERN INDIA—1)

Edited by
VERINDER GROVER
Former Reader, Deptt. of Political Science,
and Managing Editor, Indian Political Science Review,
University of Delhi, Delhi



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PREFACE

Political thinkers give a concrete context and direction to a nation's public activities and formulate its style and endow it with objective. They establish a link between political institutions and the masses of the people and devise forums for the discussion of incentives, beliefs and behaviour. In a developing nation, in particular, where the gap between nation, society and political power is understandably wide, the part to be played by political thinkers and leaders is of great importance. In such a context political leaders forge the links that bridge the big gap between the government and the people, between the town and the country and between the classes and the masses.

One such thinker was Raja Rammohun Roy. Raja Rammohun Roy was not simply a social and religious reformer. He was a man who also took keen interest in political, administrative, economic and educational field. His interest in politics, sprang from his love for liberty. He was a passionate lover in all its forms and especially of freedom of thoughts. He was perhaps the first man of 18th century who had also the true vision of an internationalist. He championed the struggle for freedom and democratic rights. He whole-heartedly supported the Reform Bill agitation in England. In his opinion the struggle between the reformers and the anti-reformers was nothing but struggle between liberty and tyranny, between justice and injustice and between right and wrong throughout the world.

Raja Rammohun Roy was born (1772-1833) at a time when India had been struggling under the heavy load of slavery and in social, religious, political fields, there was prevalent usages that had degenerated Indian society. In his early life he studied scriptures and came to Patna in 1792 to study Persian, Arabic and the holy Koran. At Varanasi he studied Sanskrit. In fact, at the age of 16 he wrote a book questioning the idolatry of the Hindus which

brought him in conflict not only with his father, but with the whole orthodox society.

After his father died (1803), Raja Rammohun Roy served from 1803-1809 as a *Dewan* in the East India Company. He resigned from the service of the East India Company in protest against the insulting behaviour of the British Collector while at Bhagalpur in 1809 and thereafter he went back to Calcutta from where he propagated his ideas regarding social, religious and political reform. Raja Rammohun Roy's many-sided onslaught against idolatry and *Suttee*, ignorance and superstitions forms a major part of his ideas about social reforms.

Raja Rammohun Roy not only condemned the practice of *Suttee* and championed the upliftment of women but he was also against the caste system prevalent among the people. He believed that the caste system prevalent in the contemporary India was fundamentally different from the *Varna* system of ancient times.

Not only Raja Rammohun Roy was a crusader against social evils but he was also a pioneer in religious reforms. In his first major work *Tuhfat-ul-Muwalddin* in the field of religion he waged a battle against orthodoxy. In this book he surveyed all established religions and tried to distinguish between the true and false elements in them and directed an attack against the latter.

Raja Rammohun Roy was the first Indian to emphasise that Indians must cultivate the national outlook to grow into a nation. He was of the opinion that a country need not have one religion, but it must have one state and a common economic and social objective aiming at the welfare of all citizens. He pointed out that it must have political freedom to pursue its objective without interference.

Raja Rammohun Roy was interested in social, religious and political reforms, he was also interested in the judicial reforms. He wanted major reforms in Judicial and Revenue Systems in India and for this he led a crusade. He was of the opinion that European judges in India were not generally discharging judicial duties satisfactorily. As they had neither the knowledge of Indian languages nor her manners and customs, they could not be expected to discharge their responsibilities judiciously. He was also in favour of changing the jury system.

Raja Rammohun Roy was interested in making India a great nation, and was against the forces of medievalism in India. Hence,

he worked ceaselessly for the amelioration of the plight of the Indian people. He was aware that the economic climate of India under the East India Company was not conducive enough to any progressive pursuits of the Indian people. The foreign traders were mainly interested in subtle plunder and commercial profits.

Though much ahead of his time he foresaw the emergence of India as a free nation in the comity of nations. He emphasised that customs, traditions, usages that caused and maintained divisions among the sections of the people had to be scrapped and a new social order based on social equality and a recognition that the welfare of man and society was the objective of religion as well as politics had to be established.

This Book is divided into three parts. Part I deals with the life history of Raja Rammohun Roy, his philosophy, his political ideas and his efforts at eradicating the social evils in the Hindu society. Part II consists of articles on Raja's interaction with the American and British Unitarians during his lifetime, his views on the system of Land Holding in British India, his association with contemporary Western orientalists and his works containing his views on *Sati* or burning of widows alive. Part III contains articles assessing the role of Raja Rammohun Roy as an apostle of Indian Awakening; "Indian Renaissance and Raja Rammohun Roy"; and Rammohun Roy as the Architect of Modern India.

This book is a systematic piecing together of articles contributed by scholars and specialists to the various journals of national and international repute. My special thanks are due to *The Modern Review*, *Mainstream*, *Socialist Perspective*, *Bengal Past and Present*, *Indian Journal of Social Work*, *Journal of Indian History*, *Swarajya*, *Organiser* and the works of Raja Rammohun Roy from which I have drawn freely. I express my deep sense of appreciation to all the contributors for their scholarly papers and gratitude to the various librarians and eminent scholars in the field who extended their co-operation to me.

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PART I

I

RAJARSHI RAMMOHUN ROY

MANI LAL C. PAREKH

BIRTH AND EARLY EDUCATION

Raja Ram Mohun Roy was born in a Brahmin family of Bengal in or about the year 1872. It is unfortunate that the proper date of his birth is not available. This event took place in the town of Radhanagar in Burdwan District. His family evidently was one of culture and position, inasmuch as for a few generations past they had taken to civil service in the times of the Mohammedan rulers of Bengal, and some of his immediate fore-fathers had even risen to a high position under that rule. Ram Mohan Roy's father had left the service of the Moslem king owing to some cause or other, and leaving Murshidabad where he was serving had come down to his native place and it was there that Ram Mohun was born. While his ancesters on his father's side were thus men who had mixed much with the affairs of the world those on his mother's side had confined themselves all the while to their priestly profession and they were justly proud of it. Moreover there was a difference in the faiths of these two families, the father's family following the Vaishnav faith while the mother's that of the Shaktas. All these diversities of vocation and belief did not fail to find a place in the composite character of him who was to be the first great reformer of Hinduism in modern times and the father of modern India.

To this rich mental inheritance from both father and mother was added a first class education that it was possible to have in those days. According to the traditions of his family, after Ram

Mohun had undergone at home some preliminary training, he was sent to a regular school in Patna to learn Arabic and Persian, a knowledge of both of which was necessary for conducting business of the Mohammedan courts and which all those who wanted to join the service of the Nabobs were required to learn. Ram Mohun was endowed with great natural gifts, his acute intelligence being the chief of these. To this in all probability was added great industry from the first. Owing to these he made the best use of his time while at Patna where he remained for some years, and was thoroughly grounded in several subjects, such as Logic, Aristotelian Philosophy, Euclid etc., besides mastering the two great languages of the Mohammedan culture. He read much of the literature in them, but more than all that he came to know something of the Moslem faith and it is this that may be said to have given a new turn to his life. The strong common sense and strength of mind which he seems to have inherited from his mother especially, together with a very deep love of truth which was native to himself, could not but find the force of Mohammad's teaching, particularly his very strong belief in the unity of God which he shared in common with the Jewish Prophets. Thus it was here in this early reading of the Koran, or of other Mohhmmedan books that the seed of the future Reform-movement was sown, and it is probably due to the same source that we owe the iconoclastic fervour with which Ram Mohun carried on his religious work all his life.

The immediate result of this study on the mind of this precocious boy of only fifteen years was that he came in conflict with his father for giving a free vent to his own opinions on the question of idolatry and the unity of God in a book that he is said to have written. So great was this conflict that he had even to leave home for some years, during which a boy that he was he is said to have travelled as far as Tibet in the manner of many Sannyasis of those days. While there, he could not but have been horrified to see the people offering the highest worship to the Lamas, and as is said it was only due to the merciful women of that country that the young boy's life was spared. For this act of these women he remained greateful not only to them all his life, but to the whole of womankind. After wandering for a period of some two or three years he came home or perhaps was recalled back, but again finding it impossible to remain under the paternal roof any longer he separated himself from his family "in consequence of his altered

habits of life and change of opinions which did not permit their living together," to use his own words.

It was probably immediately after this that he remained for some years at Benares, and while there studied most of the Hindu books and come to various conclusions with regard to them, conclusions which he later on preached to his countrymen.

With regard to much of this early period very few authentic details are available and even "An Autobiographical Sketch" from which the words quoted above are taken is regarded by some as spurious.

HIS FIRST PUBLICATION

Ram Mohun Roy began his public life by settling down at Murshidabad and publishing his first work called Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin, meaning a Gift to Monotheists or Deists, a treatise in Persian with a preface in the Arabic language. Its aim was chiefly negative, it being a protest "Against the Idolatry of all Religions", by which title it was known for a long time. The book which may have lain with him perhaps for years as a manuscript, is a small one, and is the production of a youthful immature man who takes it upon himself to criticise the religions and traditions of the whole human race, merely because they fail to fit in with his few logical formulae which he may have gathered in the course of a scanty training in a school of philosophy or two. The book clearly shows the predominant influence of his Mohammedan training and even of Mohammedanism, most of the quotations therein being taken from the Koran. However, the book is valuable chiefly as being the first expression of his mind and as such shows much of its working in his boyhood and youthfulness. Besides, it shows the great iconoclastic zeal which had taken possession of him at this early time and which more or less continued to be with him all his life. The only positive element in it is but a bare Deism, an extremely attenuated thing only a step removed from agnosticism.

The Introduction of the book stands thus :

> "I travelled in the remotest parts of the world, in plains as well as hilly lands, and found the inhabitants thereof agreeing generally in believing in the personality of One Being Who is the source of all that exists and its governor, and disagreeing

in giving peculiar attributes to that Being and in holding different creeds consisting of the doctrines of religion and precepts of *haram* (forbidden), and *halal* (lawful). From this Induction it has been known to me that turning generally towards one Eternal Being, is like a natural tendency in human beings and is common to all individuals generally. And the inclination of each sect of mankind to a particular god or gods, holding certain special attributes, and to some peculiar forms of worship or devotion, is an excrescent quality grown (in mankind) by habit and training. What a vast difference is there between the nature and habit ! Some of these sectarians are ready to confute the creeds of others owing to a disagreement with them, claiming the truth of the savings of their predecessors : while these predecessors also like other men were liable to commit sins and mistakes. Hence it may not be improper if it be said that all of them are either right or wrong. In the former case two contradictions came together which is logically inadmissible. In the latter case, it may not be improper if it be said that either falsehood is to be attributed to some religions particularly or commonly to all : in the first case *tarjlibila murajjeh i.e.* giving preference without there being any reason for it (which is logically inadmissible) follows. Hence falsehood is common to all religions without distinctions. I have explained this in Persian, as it is more intelligible to the people of Ajam (i.e. Non-Arabians)."

It is with this Introduction that youthful Ram Mohun lays before his readers his "Induction" of the existence of God from the fact of its being universally held; and this forms the positive part of the book. His other logical conclusion viz., that because all religions are contradicting one another in all things, except a general belief in the existence of God, they are all false is its negative part and the main thesis of the book. Unfortunately for this Deism, which does not attain here even to the dignity of a philosophy but is on the same level as that of any inductive generalization in science or ordinary experience, it is far from true to say, in the face of such religions as Buddhism and Jainism, that all the peoples and races of the world have believed in "the personality of One Being Who is the source of all that exists and is its governor", nor is it perfectly true to say that they have disagreed "in giving

peculiar attributes to that Being". Also it is not logical to say that because two traditions or scriptures or religions contradict each other they are both false. Ram Mohun himself came to see this fully in course of time and later on whatever truth he saw, however solitary or contradicted by other like claimants it be, he proclaimed it to the world as such.

It is in perfect keeping with this completely immature view of Religion that he finds the sources of all religion, tradition and authority in the desire of a priestly caste to preserve its own power and at best social order. He even charges the leaders and founders of various sects and religions with practising fraud upon their followers, in words such as these : "most of the leaders of different creeds, for perpetuating their names and enhancing their reputation, have declared some special beliefs in the form of pure truths resting on miracles or on the power of tongue and devices suited to the condition of the congregation, and have in a way so attracted the majority of the people towards them, that these helpless persons, bound in obedience and servitude, having wholly lost the eye and heart of perception, consider it sinful to distinguish between actual goodness and apparent sin in the execution of the orders of their leaders." All this may be true more or less of the ecclesiastical powers and priestly castes of all ages and countries, but it is hardly true of the great founders of the various religions. In this also Ram Mohun advanced in his views later on and grew into an enthusiastic admirer of such religious teachers as Shankaracharya, Mohammad and above all of Jesus Christ. That while writing this he was thinking more of the ordinary people and priestly castes than of the great teachers is probably evident from a passage like *this* : "The influence of these leaders over their followers and the extent of their submission to them have reached such a degree that some people having a firm belief in the sayings of their leaders, think some stones and vegetables and animals to be the real objects of their worship : and in opposing those who may attempt to destroy these objects of their worship or to insult them, they think shedding the blood of others or sacrificing their own lives, an object of pride in this world, and a cause of salvation in the next."

Then he goes on to show that the need of religion being rooted in the "social instinct" of man, and as "the foundation of faiths is based on the truth of the existence of the soul and on the

existence of the next world (although the real nature of both is hidden)", every religion has necessarily made provision for social laws governing civil life and have attached rewards and punishments to certain acts both in this world and the next, "for the sake of the welfare of the people (society)", though not without appending to these a great many extraneous things which on the other hand have done more harm than good. Out of this tangle of truth and untruth, "any person of sound mind" can thread his way "to the one Being who is the fountain of the harmonious organization of the universe, and will pay attention to the good of the society", thus "becoming free from the useless restraints of religion which sometimes become sources of prejudice one against another and causes of physical and mental troubles". With such a belief in a purely utilitarian origin and end of all religion as this is, religion which serves mainly the end of preserving and advancing the social and personal well-being of man, it is no wonder that he found very little in great religions to sympathize with and much to protest against. The only argument that he brings forward against all those systems of penances and punishments which most of the old religions are full of, besides their being non-conducive to social and personal well-being is that they contradict one another and therefore they are false. According to youthful Ram Mohun, people believe in these and "the centres of the circles of faiths" because they do not distinguish between nature which leads them to a belief in God as "the source of creation" and in the sequence of cause and effect, and habit which leads them to believe in all those things that they are told by their elders and religious teachers from their childhood and boyhood. They are misled further into believing these by a belief in miracles which are said to have taken place in the lives of the great founders, but in all such belief they forget that there must be some unknown hidden natural cause behind every such alleged miracle if it at all took place, for all these miracles are accepted on "tradition", which itself is very doubtful, being handed down from age to age and thus getting additions and accretions. Moreover these traditions of various religions are contradictory of one another, and therefore, they are all false, unless we prefer to be thrown on either of the horns of the dilemma of "admitting two contradictories" or "giving one thing preference over another without any reasonable ground." Hence no tradition which is contrary to reason is to be accepted.

After discrediting thus the value of miracles and tradition, Ram Mohun proceeds to do the same with the authority or even the necessity of "prophets or leaders of religion". He says with regard to this as follows : "Some people argue in this way that the Almighty Creator has opened the way of guidance to mortal beings through the medium of prophets or leaders of religions. This is evidently futile, because the same people believe that all things in creation, whether good or bad, proceed from the Great Creator without any intermediate agency, and that the apparent causes are the means and conditions of that (*i.e.*, their coming into existence). Hence it is to be seen whether the sending of prophets and revelation to them from God are immediately from God or through intermediate agency. In the first case there is no necessity of an intermmediate agency for guidance to salvation, and there does not seem any necessity of the instrumentality of prophets or revelation. And in the second case, there should be a series of intermediate agencies. Hence the advent of prophets and revelation like other external things have no reference to God, but depend upon the invention of an inventor. Prophets and others should not be particularly connected (or mixed up) with the teaching of a faith. Besides what one nation calls a guide to a true faith, another calls a misleading to an erroneous way."

He goes on to argue in the same way against all those who plead for belief in the established faith on the ground of practical prudence etc., and then lays down his own positive belief in contrast with that of the believers in established religions in these words :

> "Those who prefer the so-called invented revelation of mankind to the natural inspiration from God, which consists in attending to social life with their own species and having an intuitive faculty of discriminating good from evil, instead of gaining the union of hearts with mutual love and affection of all their fellow creatures without difference in shape and colour or creeds and religions, which is a pure devotion acceptable to God, the Creator of nature, consider some special formulae and bodily motions to be the cause of Salvation and receiving bounty from Almighty God."

After contrasting thus his own faith with that of most people, he classifies mankind into the following four kinds :

Firstly—A class of deceivers who in order to attract the people to themselves wilfully invent doctrines, creeds and faiths and put the people to troubles and cause disunion among them.

Secondly— A class of deceived people who without inquiring into the fact, adhere to others.

Thirdly—A class of people who are deceivers and also deceived : they are those who having themselves faith in the sayings of another induce others to adhere to them.

Fourthly—Those who by the help of Almighty God are neither deceivers nor deceived."

He closes the book with a promise of publishing another book entitled Discussion of Various Religions in which he was to give details bearing on the subject, a work which he could not write, or at any rate was never published.

As said above, this book, if it has any value, has it only as being the first expression of his mind and as showing the prevailing influence thereupon at this early period. The case of pure Rationalism is very clearly set forth here, and therein he has much in common with the school of Deists and Illuminists which had done the same kind of work only a short while back in Europe and more particularly in France, a work which preceded the French Revolution. This shows how the human mind is the same whether in the East or the West, for at this period Ram Mohun knew nothing of the French school or of the English language, his sole study hitherto being that of the Moslem and Hindu literatures and cultures. Morever, this book affords a very interesting study of the working of the mind of a man who, in course of time, advanced from its barren negative position to the very positive one of the "Precepts of Jesus" and the Trust-Deed of the Brahma Samaj, and later on came to be known almost as the founder of the Science of Comparative Religion.

IN THE SCHOOL OF PRACTICAL LIFE AND OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Ram Mohun entered into the service of the British East India Company in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and thereby he not only entered the sbhool of life where he came to know the world more intimately but came to have a proper

acquaintance with Western Civilization also. His keen and appreciative mind soon understood the sterling worth of the English people upon whom he had looked so long with much distrust, and by means of the English language which he mastered in course of time he came to comprehend the greatness of the Western Civilization in many of its aspects as few Indians have done since, in spite of the manifold advantages of schools, colleges, universities, libraries, etc., that the people of the following generations have possessed. But he could do all this because he was a man of capacious and versatile mind. He soon interested himself in the politics of Europe, in which Napoleon Bonaparte was then the moving figure and came to conceive much admiration for his great genius. He studied very carefully the momentous questions of constitutional and democratic government that were then being decided, not in the Houses of Parliaments of different nations, but on the battlefields of Europe. He came not only to understand but even to appreciate some of the principles that governed the French Revolution and began to look upon Democracy as the last word in politics, and as almost a new dispensation. Though England had not taken very kindly to the new gospel the watchwords of which were Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, it so far was, with the solitary exception of the United States of America, the only country the government of which was more or less democratic. It was on this that Ram Mohun built all his hopes for the good of his country from the English connection, and he tried to cement it to the best of his ability till the end of his life.

Thus by the time that Ram Mohun Roy was forty or so, he had made himself almost at home in three civilizations and cultures, viz., Hindu, Moslem and European, and thus had laid a foundation for his future work such as few men have been in a position to do. A Raja Ram Mohun Roy or a Keshub could only be the product of a country like India which, alone of all the lands and countries, has been the meeting place of many civilizations and cultures, all of which it has tried to assimilate in however tentative a manner it may be. For the first time in the history of the world three great cultures and religions met in this land and India was face to face with a situation which had never arisen before. It was not that Ram Mohun had become fully conscious of this fact or the full import of the situation at once, but in him the spirit of India or the genius of its people, which has always showed itself assimila-

tive of all that is good, asserted itself and began to take a new view of things. Thus Ram Mohun was a representative not only of his own contemporaries, but of the whole of Modern India, one of the very greatest thereof and as such looked far ahead in all directions and in some to an extent that has not been reached since.

After serving the Company's Government with conspicuous ability and efficiency for over a decade, Ram Mohun retired with sufficient competence to live in future in tolerable ease and comfort in what we may well call *Vanaprasthashram*, to devote himself entirely to the cause of Religion which was dearest and nearest to his heart, and to the service of his country, the claimant claims of which were pressing home to his heart and mind from all directions. In order that he may be able to do this in the most effective manner, he took up his residence in Calcutta which, as the capital of the New India that was coming into existence, was beginning to be the centre and source of light and leading not only of Bengal but of the whole of India. His fame as one who contemplated religious reform of his country, as a man of great learning and culture, had already preceded him, and there were in that city already a few friends and sympathizers with whose help he might begin his work. Accordingly he came to Calcutta in the year 1914 and entered the new *Vanaprasthashram*, not of solitude but of service of the New India that was coming to be and in the making of which he played no insignificant part.

HINDU PROTESTANTISM

Now that he was matured and mellowed with age and experience, he set himself to his chief task, his lifework, *viz.*, the abolition of idolatry and the spread of Monotheism, no more in the same spirit as that of his first work, but as one who comes before his people as a revivalist and reformer of their ancient religion. As said before he had come from his early youth to possess a great passion for Monotheism, though it was more of a negative than positive kind and was more like Deism. During the course of a decade and more that had passed since his first publication, he had come to see the necessity as well as advisibility of appealing to the people through their own national scriptures rather than on ground of reason as at first, particularly when these scriptures upheld a sort of monotheism which, though not quite free from touches of

pantheism, was for his immediate purpose sufficiently militant against idolatry. For this reason he translated and published the Vedant Sutra into Bengali in 1915, and into English in 1816, entitling it "The Vedant, or the Resolution of all the Veds, the most celebrated and revered work of Brahmanical Theology, establishing the unity of the Supreme Being, and that He alone is the subject of propitiation and worship."

In the preface thereof he says as follows :

> "The whole body of the Hindu Theology, Law and Literature, is contained in the Vedas, which are affirmed to be co-eval with the creation. These works are extremely luminous, and being written in the most elevated and metaphorical style, are as may be well supposed, in many passages seemingly confused and contradictory. Upwards of two thousand years ago, the great Vyasa, reflecting on the prepetual difficulty arising from these sources, composed with great discrimination a complete and compendious abstract of the whole, and also reconciled those texts which appeared to stand at variance."

It is very interesting as well as instructive to see the development that has taken place in his mind since the publication of his "A Gift to Monotheists." to see how he has come to believe in scripture and its authoritative interpretation. But the most marked feature of the development is that whereas the contradictions between various religions were formerly his greatest stumbling-blocks even to the acceptance of any religion whatsoever, now even the contradictions of the same religion or scripture he no more stumbles at; rather the harmonious reconciliation of these is his greatest delight. It is a point of further interest and even a lesson of some value to notice in passing how the next step, *viz.*, to resolve all the religions with all their innumerable contradictions into a harmonious whole was taken in the very institution which Ram Mohun established at the end of his career, *viz.*, the Brahma Samaj and by his great successor Keshub Chunder Sen.

Another very important thing in which he makes a like advance upon his former position is in his increasing distrust of the reasoning faculty on which he had relied altogether formerly. No more he looks upon it as the sole organ of religious knowledge as will be seen from the following passage in the same preface :

"I hope it will not be presumed that I intend to establish the preference of my faith over that of other men. The result of controversy on such a subject, however multiplied, must be ever unsatisfactory, for the reasoning faculty, which leads men to certainty in things within its reach produces no effect on questions beyond its comprehension. I do no more than assert, that if correct reasoning and the dictates of common sense induce the belief of a wise, uncreated Being, who is the Supporter and Ruler of the boundless universe, we should also consider him the most powerful and supreme existence, far surpassing our powers of comprehension or description."

With regard to the end in view in publishing and spreading the true knowledge of God among his Hindoo countrymen especially, he says in the same as follows :

"My constant reflections on the inconvenient, or rather injurious rites introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindoo idolatry which, more than any other pagan worship, destroys the texture of society, together with compassion for my countrymen, have compelled me to use every possible effort to awaken them from their dream of error, and making them acquainted with their scriptures, enable them to contemplate with true devotion the unity and omnipresence of Nature's God."

In publishing an abridgement of the same into the English language he aimed at convincing some of the Europeans who had alreydy begun "to palliate and soften the features of Hindu idolatry" in just the same manner as he has been done since by such a body as the Theosophical Society. These defenders of Hindu idolatry said that these objects of worship were considered by their votaries as emblematical representations of the Supreme Divinity. In reply to this Ram Mohun says that that explanation of idolatry is not true to facts as he knew them intimately. This is what he says in connection with the same :

"The truth is, the Hindus of the present day have no such views of the subject, but firmly believe in the real existence of innumerable gods and goddesses, who possess, in their own departments, full and independent power, and to propitiate

them, and not the true God, are temples erected and ceremonies performed. There can be no doubt, however, and it is my sole design to prove, that every rite has its derivation from the allegorical adoration of the true Deity ; but at the present day all this is forgotten, and among many it is even heresy to mention it."

Then he goes on with the text itself giving therefrom only very abridged quotations and interspersing them with his own short explanations. He ends the book with these words which may be taken as a sort of a confession of his own faith :

"The Veda also positively asserts that "He who in life was devoted to the Supreme Being, shall (after death) be absorbed in Him, and again be neither liable to birth nor death, reduction nor augmentation."

"The Veda begins and concludes with the three peculiar and mysterious epithets of God, *viz.*, first Aum : second, Tat : third, Sat. The first of these signifies, That Being which preserves, destroys and creates. The second implies, That only Being which is neither male nor female. The third announces The true Being. These collective terms signify, that *One unknown, true Being is the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the Universe.*"

After giving thus the background of the Vedic faith as it was formulated by Vyasa in the Vedant Sutra, Ram Mohun proceeded with the task of publishing some of the Upanishads themselves, "the principal Chapters of the Veda" as he called them, "in conformitv to the comments of the great Shankaracharya." The first that was thus published was Isopnishad, in the preface to which he enters at some length into the discussion of the merits and demerits of Idolatry, quoting from the Puranas, Tantras, etc., for the purpose of showing that idolworship is meant only for the illiterate and incapable. Speaking again of the allegorical interpretation offered by some Europeans owing to their own inability to conceive of such a thing as pure idolatry, he says as follows :

"Hindus of the present age, with a very few exceptions, have not the least idea that it is to the attributes of the Supreme

Being, as figuratively represented by shapes corresponding to the nature of those attributes, they offer adoration and worship under the denomination of gods and goddesses. On the contrary, the slightest investigation will clearly satisfy every inquirer, that it makes a material part of their system to hold as articles of faith all those particular circumstances, which are essential to belief in the independent existence of the objects of their idolatry as deities clothed with divine power.

"Locality of habitation and a mode of existance analogous to their own views of earthly things, are uniformly ascribed to each particular god. Thus the devotees of Siva, misconceiving the real spirit of the Scriptures, not only place an implicit credence in the separate existence of Siva, but even regard him as an omnipotent being, the greatest of all the divinities, who, as they say, inhabits the northern mountain of Kailash, and that he is accompanied by two wives and several children and surrounded with numerous attendants. In like manner the followers of Vishnu, mistaking the allegorical representations of the Shastras for relation of real facts, believe him to be chief over all other gods, and that he resides with his wife and attendants on the summit of heaven. Similar opinions are also held by the worshippers of Kali, in respect to that goddess. And in fact, the same observations are equally applicable to every class of Hindu devotees in regard to their respective gods and goddesses. And so tenacious are those devotees in respect to the honour due to their chosen divinities, that where they meet in such holy places as Haridwar, Prayag, Shiv-Kanchi, or Vishnu-Kanchi in the Dekkan, the adjustment of the point of precedence not only occasions the warmest verbal altercations, but sometimes even blows and violence. Neither do they regard the images of those gods merely in the light of instruments for elevating the mind to the conception of those supposed beings : they are simply in themselves made objects of worship. For whatever Hindu purchases an idol in the market, or constructs one with his own hand, or has one made under his own superintendence, it is his invariable practice to perform certain ceremonies called *Pran-Pratistha*, or the endowment of animation, by which he believes that its nature is changed from that of the mere materials of which it is formed, and that it acquires not only life but supernatural

power. Shortly afterwards, if the idol be of the masculine gender, he marries it to a feminine one, with no less pomp and magnificence than he has while celebrating the nuptials of his own children. The mysterious process is now complete, and the god and goddess are now esteemed the arbiters of his destiny, and continually receive his most ardent adoration.

"At the same time the worshipper of images ascribes to them at once the opposite natures of human and superhuman beings. In addition to their supposed wants as living beings, he is seen feeding, or pretending to feed them every morning and evening : and as in the hot season he is careful to fan them, so in the cold he is equally regardful of their comfort, covering them day by day with warm clothing and placing them at night in a snug bed. But superstition does not find a limit here : the acts and speeches of the idols, and their assumption of various shapes and colours, are gravely related by the Brahmins, and with all the marks of veneration are firmly believed by their deluded followers. Other practices they have with regard to these which decency forbids me to explain. In thus endeavouring to remove a mistake, into which I have reason to believe many European gentlemen have been led by a benevolent wish to find an excuse for the errors of my countrymen, it is a considerable gratification to me to find that the latter have begun to be so far sensible of the absurdity of their real beliefs and practices as to find it inconvenient to shelter them under such a clock, however, flimsy and borrowed. The adoption of such a subterfuge encourages me greatly to hope, that they will in time abandon what they are sensible cannot be defended : and that, forsaking the superstition of idolatry, they will embrace the rational worship of the God of Nature, as enjoined in the Vedas and confirmed by the dictates of common sense."

This very realistic and perfectly true description of the state of gross idolatry into which the Hindus of those days had sunk completely, and from which they are far from free even to-day after a century of anti-idolatrous propaganda of the Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj and Christian' Missions, will show the true nature of idolatry far more correctly than most things said in its defence. After this he goes on to refute one or two more arguments in favour of

idolatry such as from custom etc., and then concludes the preface with an appeal to his countrymen to make a proper study and examination of their own Scriptures and judge of the truth themselves rather than follow those who would not let them examine the Scriptures. Then follows a short introduction wherein he laments the social condition of the Hindus which, he says, is the result of their idolatrous beliefs and practices. He says therein as follows :

> "Living constantly among Hindoos of different sects and professions, I have had ample opportunity of observing the superstitious puerilities into which they have been thrown by their self-interested guides, who, in defiance of the law as well as of common sense, have succeeded but too well in conducting them to the temple of idolatry : and while they hid from their view the true substance of morality, have infused into their simple hearts a weak attachment for its mere shadow.
>
> "For the chief part of the theory and practice of Hindooism, I am sorry to say, is made to consist in the adoption of a peculiar mode of diet : the least aberration from which (even though the conduct of the offender may in other respects be pure and blameless) is not only visited with the severest censure, but actually punished by exclusion from the society of his family and friends. In a word he is doomed to undergo what is commonly called loss of caste.
>
> "On the contrary, the rigid observance of this grand article of Hindoo faith is considered in so high a light as to compensate for every moral defect. Even the most atrocious crimes weigh little or nothing in the balance against the supposed guilt of its violation. Murder, theft or perjury, though brought home to the party by a judicial sentence, so far from inducing loss of caste, is visited in their society with no peculiar mark of infamy or disgrace.
>
> "My reflection upon these solemn truths have been most painful for many years. I have never ceased to contemplate with the strongest feelings of regret, the obstinate adherence of my countrymen to their fatal system of idolatry, inducing, for the sake of propitiating their supposed Deities, the violation of every human and social feeling. And this in various instances; but more especially in the dreadful acts of self-destruction and

the immolation of the nearest relations, under the delusion of conforming to sacred relligious rites. I have never ceased, I repeat, to contemplate these practices with the strongest feelings of regret, and to view in them the moral debasement of a race who, I can not help thinking, are capable of better things : whose susceptibility, patience and mildness of character render them worthy of a better destiny. Under these impressions, therefore, I have been impelled to lay before them genuine translations of parts of their scripture, which inculcates not only the enlightened worship of one God, but the purest principles of morality, accompanied with such notes as I deemed requisite to oppose the arguments employed by the Brahmans in defence of their beloved system. Most earnestly do I pray that the whole may, sooner or later, prove efficient in producing on the minds of the Hindus in general, a conviction of the rationality of believing in and adoring the Supreme Being only : together with a complete perception and practice of that grand and comprehensive moral principle—*Do unto others as you would be done by.*"

These long quotations have justification only in this that, they show as nothingelse can from their being contemporaneous and from their being written by the most trustworthy Indian of that time, the moral, social and spiritual condition of Hindustan or of the Hindus just at that time when they were emerging from what may be called the medieval period. People to-day are apt to forget what their own forefathers were only a hundred years ago, and how much they have travelled on the path of all-round progress since that time. "The self-destruction and the immolation of the nearest relatives" of which he speaks here is the grossly inhuman custom of Suttee of which Ram Mohun's own sister-in-law had been a victim only a few years ago, and of which hundreds were willing and unwilling victims every year in Bengal alone. One has only to remember what this custom was to be fully aware of the moral difference that has been made between the condition of the society then and now, a moral difference due largely to the conscious and unconscious working of that very "grand and comprehensive moral principle", the Christian precept *par excellence* "Do unto others as you would be done by", which Ram Mohun quotes for the first time in his own religious writings which he was laying before his

countrymen for their serious perusal and consequent uplift, which fact shows that Ram Mohun was beginning to make his acquaintance with the Christian religion and scripture, if he had not already made it.

Ram Mohun later on published the Katha-Upnishad into Bengalee and English, the latter "to assist the European community in forming their opinion respecting Hindoo Theology, rather from the matter found in their doctrinal scriptures, than from the Puranas, moral tales, or any other modern works, or from the superstitious rites and habits daily encouraged and fostered by their self-interested leaders". The idolatrous system he calls one "which destroys to the utmost degree the natural texture of society, and prescribes crimes of the most heinous nature, which even the most savage nations would blush to commit, unless compelled by the most urgent necessity".

All this work was not done without calling forth defences from the Hindu advocates of idolatry, among which there was one especially which Ram Mohun had to reply to, in a special tract calling it "Hindu Theism". This was from Madras and was written by one called Shankar Shastri, the Head Master of the Madras Government College. In his reply to the charge that he was setting himself up as a discoverer and reformer, Ram Mohun writes as follows :—

> "In none of my writings, nor in any verbal discussion, have I ever pretended to reform or to discover the doctrines of the unity of God, nor have I ever assumed the title of reformer or discoverer : so far from such an assumption, I have urged in every work that I have hitherto published, that the doctrines of the unity of God are real Hinduism, as that religion was practised by our ancestors, and as it is well-known even at the present age to many learned Brahmins."

Another very valuable fact that is incidentally brought out in connection with his reply is that Ram Mohun Roy was the first man in India to translate the Vedas in the vernacular, at least in the north of India, the book being confined so long entirely to the Sanskrit language, and more or less to the Brahmins who alone were entitled to the knowledge of it. To have been the first among Hindus to give a free access to the commonest people to their most

ancient scriptures by translating them in their own vernaculars reflects not a little credit on him for pioneering boldness and wisdom, although he had before him the example of such men as Wycliff and Luther in Europe, and of William Carey in India in his own time who had begun his great and unparalleled work of translating the Bible into all the vernaculars of India, foreigner and single-handed as he was, not to mention the most important example that was always before him, *viz.* the fact of even the most ordinary moslem man or woman being acquainted with the Koran which, though then not translated into any of the Indian vernaculars, was commonly read by all and sundry in the original. Any way it was a great departure and was worthy of the great man.

A very serious objection that was brought against his work which was the propagation of *Jnana-Kanda i.e.* the spiritual knowledge, was that according to the ancient system which was practised for thousands of years, this was necessarily preceeded by *Karma-Kanda* and *Upasana i.e.* sacrifices, alms-giving, penance, fasting, worshipping gods and goddesses and various incarnations, etc. all which found no place in the system preached by Ram Mohun Roy. To this he gave the following reply which, in as much as it makes this *Jnana-Marga* meant only for exceptional people, could hardly have been satisfactory to himself. His words are these :

> "I, in common with the Vedas and the Vedanta, and Manu (the first and best of Hindu lawgivers) as well as with the most celebrated Shankaracharya, deny these ceremonies being necessary to obtain the knowledge of the divine nature, as the Vedanta positively declares, in text 36, section 4th, chapter 3rd.
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> "Man may acquire the true knowledge of God, even without observing the rules and rites prescribed by the Veda for each class, as it is found in the Veda that many persons, who neglected the performance of the rites and ceremonies, owing to their perpetual attention to the adoration of the Supreme Being, acquired the true knowledge respecting the Supreme Spirit. The Veda says "Many learned true believers never worshipped fire, or any celestial gods through fire." And also the Vedant asserts in the 1st text of the 3rd section of the third chapter : "The worship authorized by all the Vedas is one, as the directions for the worship of the only Supreme

Being are in variably found in the Veda, and the epithets of the Supreme and Omnipresent Being etc. commonly imply God alone." Manu, as I have elsewhere quoted, thus declares on the same point, chapter 12th text 92nd. "Thus must the chief of the twiceborn, though he neglect the ceremonial rites mentioned in the Shastras be diligent in attaining a knowledge of God, in controlling his organs of sense and in repeating the Veda." Again chapter 4th text 23rd : "Some constantly sacrifice their breath in their speech, when they instruct others of God aloud, and their speech in their breath, when they meditate in silence : perceiving in their speech and breath thus employed, the imperishable fruit of a sacrificial offering." 24th :
"Other Brahmins incessantly perform those sacrifices only, seeing with the eye of divine learning, that the scriptural knowledg is the root of every ceremonial observance." And also the same author declares in chapter 2nd text 84th : "All rites ordained in the Vedas, oblations to fire and solemn sacrifices, pass away : but that which passes not away is declared to be the syllable Om thence called Akshara since it is a symbol of God, the Lord of created beings."

All these texts which Ram Mohun Roy so sedulously brings forward in order to prove the validity of *Jnana-Kanda* apart from the *Karma-*, and *Upasana-Kanda*, instead of strengthening his position, only bring out its weakness in as much as they show clearly that it is only in exceptional cases that such a course could be held valid and may prove beneficial. That he was not altogether unconscious of this great difficulty in the way of his teaching being acceptable to all seems clear from the following reply that he gives :—

"The learned gentleman states that the difficulty of attaining a knowledge of the Invisible and Almighty Spirit is evident from the preceding verses." I agree with him in that point, that the attainment of perfect knowledge of the nature of Godhead is certainly difficult or rather impossible; but to read the existence of the Almighty Being in his works of nature, is not, I will dare to say, so difficult to the mind of a man possessed of common sense, and unfettered by prejudice, as to conceive artificial images to be possessed, at once, of the opposite

natures of human and divine beings, which idolaters constantly ascribe to their idols, strangely believing that things so *constructed* can be converted by ceremonies into *Constructors* of the universe."

In these words if he finds any escape out of the difficulty it is only by substituting for what he calls Hindu Theism natural Deism, and then by the negative process of showing the utter absurdity of idolatry. As Ram Mohun himself admits a little further on, the great teachers of what he calls Hindu Theism, such as Vyas, Manu and Shankaracharya, the teachers whose authoritative interpretation of the Vedas he holds as binding on all the Hindus, do keep the path to idolatry open at least to a large part, if not to all, as was said by Shankar Shastri. In this connection he says :—"I cannot admit that the worship of these attributes under various representations, by means of consecrated objects, has been prescribed by the Veda to the *Human Race* : as this kind of worship of consecrated objects is enjoined by the Shastra to those only who are incapable of raising their mind to the notion of an invisible Supreme Being." Ram Mohun was on surer ground when he replied to the objection from the impossibility of worshipping the invisible God, in the following words : "Permit me in this instance to ask, whether every Musalman in Turkey and Arabia, from the highest to the lowest, every Protestant Christian at least of Europe, and many followers of Kabir and Nanak, do worship God without the assistance of consecrated objects ?" It was the example of these, chiefly of the first, and then of such eclectic schools of thought as those of Nanak and Kabir, schools which were deeply influenced by Mohammedanism, nay, were as much the product of that faith as of Hinduism, that was at the back of all these iconoclastic efforts of Ram Mohun Roy, and not the half hesitating permission of the Hindu Shastra given to those few who in self-conscious superiority might think themselves above others and thus worship God in a spiritual manner, whereas its direct and unambiguous prescription to the whole Human Race according to Shankar Shastri, or its injunction to the majority of men, if not to all, according to Ram Mohun humself, was the other way.

With regard to some of the immoral practices in connection with much of this idolatry, he again says as follows :—

"But should the learned gentleman require some practical grounds for objecting to the idolatrous worship of the Hindus, I can be at no loss to give him numberless instances, where the ceremonies that have been instituted under the pretext of honuring the all-perfect Author of Nature, are of a tendency utterly subversive of every moral principle.

"I begin with Krishna as the most adored of the incarnations, the number of whose devotees is exceedingly great. His worship is made to consist in the institution of his image or picture, accompanied by one or more females, and in the contemplation of his history and behaviour, such as his perpetration of murder upon a female of the name of Putna : his compelling a great number of married and unmarried women to stand before him denuded, his debauching them and several others to the mortal affliction of their husbands and relations : his annoying them, by violating the laws of cleanliness and other facts of the same nature. The grossness of his worship does not find a limit here. His devotees very often personify in the same manner as European actors upon stages do) him and his female companions, dancing with indecent gestures, and singing songs relative to his love and debaucheries. It is impossible to explain in language fit to meet the public eye, the mode in which Mahadev, or the destroying attribute, is worshipped by the generality of the Hindus : suffice it to say, that it is altogether congenial with the indecent nature of the image, under whose form he is most commonly adored. The stories respecting him which are read by his devotees in the Tantras, are of a nature that, if told of any man, would be offensive to the ears of the most abandoned of either sex. In the worship of Kali, human sacrifices, the use of wine, criminal intercourse and licencious songs are included : the first of these practices has become generally extinct : but it is believed that there are parts of the country where human victims are still offered, Debauchery, however, universally forms the principal part of the worship of her followers. Nigam and other Tantras may satisfy every reader of the horrible tenets of the worshippers of the two latter deities. The modes of worship of almost all the inferior deities are pretty much the same."

The moral passion with which this passage is full and which

makes him write it and things like it in other places is remarkable and unique in the history of Modern India. He is filled with the passion for righteousness and moral purity and wants to see these established in the heart of the Hindu society. There is no weak tolerance here with moral abuse, but the courage of conviction of the highest kind which makes him say what he feels in the face of all opposition. It is this which puts him in the front rank of the reformers of religious and social life all over the world.

Ram Mohun concluded this paper on Hindu Theism with one paragraph more in which we have for the first time the mention of "Christ the Saviour." This was made at first by Shanker Shastri who called him a "personification of the mercy and kindness of God (I mean actual not allegorical personification)." To this way of looking at Christ by an orthodox Hindu, Ram Mohun replies in the following negative way, saying :—

> "From the little knowledge I had acquired of the tenets of Christians and those of anti-Christians I thought there were only three prevailing opinions respecting the nature of Christ, *viz.*, that he was considered by some as the expounder of the laws of God and the mediator between God and man : by many to be one of the three mysterious persons of the Godhead whilst others such as the Jews say that he was a mere man. But to consider Christ as a personification of the mercy of God is, if I mistake not, a new doctrine in Christianity, the discussion of which, however, has no connection with the present subject."

The fact that in this first serious controversy relating to Hinduism itself that was held in Modern India, it was the orthodox interpreter of Hinduism who had the great courage, not only to introduce the name of Christ, but even to go to the length of interpreting Christianity in a way, which, though mistaken, was certainly nearer the truth than what Ram Mohun ever came to even in his later efforts *viz.*, Unitarian Christianity, is not without very great significance. But what is more surprising still is that, after giving such a bold and new interpretation of Christianity, the orthodox Hindu defender goes a step further and tries to so organically relate it to Hinduism as to make Christ and Christianity almost its crown and fulfillment. This shows in what relation *true* and *genuine*

orthodox Hinduism has stood with Christianity from the first, and how every real Hindu has sought to give at least some of the best part of his heart, if not all, to the crucified Christ Jesus.

As for this Shanker Shastri, one finds from the very few extracts from his defence that are given by Ram Mohun in his reply that he was a veritable chip of the old block of South India, which produced some of the greatest religious geniuses of medieval India, such as Shankar, Ramanuja, Madhwa, etc. Besides, he, in his catholicity as well as genuine understanding of the true spirit of the whole of Hinduism, higher as well as popular, is not an unworthy forerunner of that school which is known by the name of Ramkrishna Paramhansa and Vivekananda, and of a part of Keshub's own development in his last phase. He, in his present defence of Hinduism, shows a far deeper understanding of the affinity that exists between the Pauranic and popular Hinduism, which had its origin in the desire to avoid the extreme abstractedness of the Vedas and Vedant and to make religion concrete, a thing of flesh and blood as well as of heart and spirit, and Christianity which fulfils this desire without any of those absurdities of polytheism into which popular Hinduism had fallen. This we see from his speaking of Christ as *the saviour*, and saying about him that he should be considered an actual personification of the mercy and kindness of God and not an allegorical personification such as Hindu gods and goddesses were.

Ram Mohun Roy wrote a second defence, in the same year 1817, against another head Pundit of the Government College at Calcutta, almost in the same strain. In this he draws an interesting and instructive contrast between the Greek and Roman idolatry on the one hand, and the Hindu idolatry on the other, showing how the evil of idolatry in India was enhanced by the system of caste in a way like which nothing is known in other countries. His actual words are as follows :

> "I, however, beg leave to remark on this instance, that though the idolatory practised by the Greeks and Romans was certainly just as impure, absured and puerile as that of the present Hindoos, yet the former was by no means so destructive of the comforts of life, or injurious to the texture of society, as the latter. The present Hindu idolatry being made to consist in following certain modes and restraints of diet (which

according to the authorities of the Mahabharat and other histories were never observed by their forefathers) has subjected its importunate votaries to entire separation from the world, and also from each other, and to constant inconveniences and distress."

There are one or two more facts concerning the degraded condition of the society of those days which are worth recording in as much as they show what advance has been made since. Speaking of the sale of girls, he writes :—"The sale of female children under pretence of marriage is practised by nearly two-thirds of the Brahmans of Bengal and Tirhoot, as well as by their followers generally." With regard to the frightful state of polygamy then prevalent, he writes; "In defiance, however, of this restraint (imposed by Yagnavalkya even in case of a second marriage which is allowed only under certain conditions) some of them marry thirty or forty women, either for the sake of money got with them at marriage, or to gratify brutal inclinations."

After this Ram Mohun published the Mundak and the Kena Upnishads, and he makes in the last paragraph of the introduction to the latter a significant statement with regard to the value of tradition and the limitation of reason, which shows how far he has advanced from the position of his first production in his immature years. He says as follows :

"I have often lamented, in our general researches into theological truth, we are subjected to the conflict of many obstacles. When we look to the traditions of ancient nations, we often find them at variance with each other : and when, discouraged by this circumstance, we appeal to reason as a surer guide, we soon find how incompetent it is, alone, to conduct us to the object of our pursuit. We often find that, instead of facilitating our endeavours or clearing up our perplexities, it only serves to generate a universal doubt, incompatible with principles on which our comfort and happiness mainly depend. The best method perhaps is, neither to give ourselves up exclusively to the guidance of the one or the other : but by a proper use of the lights furnished by both, endeavour to improve our intellectual and moral faculties, relying on the goodness of

the Almighty Power, which alone enables us to attain that which we earnestly and diligently seek for."

Along with these efforts of his to spread Vedic Monotheism through these manifold publications, controversies. etc., he was making others for the removal of such gross abuses as the custom of suttee and also for the spread of education in co-operation with a man like David Hare, who too had a hand in the formation of the new generation.

As a result of all these activities a group of men of weight and social dignity such as Dwarkanath Tagore, the father of Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore and grandfather of Ravindra Nath Tagore, and others were gradually gathering round him not only for the purpose of carrying on the same propaganda but even for the cultivation of spiritual life in accordance with their monotheistic beliefs. As early as 1815, a society called Atmiya Sabha, a Friendly Association, had been started for the purpose of cultivation spiritual fellowship, the chief features of which were recitations of some portions of the Hindu scriptures and the signing of theistic hymns. He himself gives an account of all these activities and movements of his after about three years of his arrival in Calcutta to an old friend Mr. John Digby in England, under whom he had worked while in Company's service, as follows :

"I take this opportunity of giving you a summary account of my proceedings since the period of your departure from India. "The consequence of my long and uninterrupted researches into religious truth has been that I have found the doctrines of Christ more conducive to moral principles and better adapted for the use of rational beings, than any others which have come to my knowledge and have also found Hindus in general more superstitious and miserable, both in performance of their religious rites, and in their domestic concerns, than the rest of the known nations on the earth. I, therefore, with a view of making them happy and comfortable both here and hereafter, not only employed verbal arguments against the absurdities of the idolatry practised by them, but also translated their more revered theological work, namely Vedant, into Bengali and Hindustani, and also several chapters of the Veda, in order to convince them that the unity of God, and absur-

dity of idolatry, are evidently pointed out by their own Scriptures. I, however, in the beginning of my pursuits, met with the greatest opposition from their self-interested leaders, the Brahmins, and was deserted by my nearest relations I consequently felt extremely melancholy; in that critical situation the only comfort that I had was the consoling and rational conversation of my European friends, especially those of Scotland and England.

"I now with the greatest pleasure inform you that several of my countrymen have risen superior to their prejudices : many are inclined to seek for the truth and a great number of those who dissented from me have now coincided with me in opinion. This engagement has prevented me from proceeding to Europe as soon as I could wish. But you may depend upon my setting off for England within a short period of time, and if you do not return to India before October next, you will most probably receive a letter from me, informing you of the exact time of my departure for England, and of the name of the vessel on which I shall embark."

This kind of life and work went on till about 1820 when Ram Mohun Roy entered on altogether a new phase of his career which was much more in accordance with his innermost beliefs. As for his visit to Enaland of which he speaks in this letter it had to be postponed for a number of years to come.

THE PUBLICATION OF THE "PRECEPTS OF JESUS"

The careful student of religious truth that Ram Mohun was, he may have learnt to have some kind of reverence for Jesus Christ, even from his early youth, when he studied the Koran which holds up Jesus as the greatest of prophets except, of course, Mohammad. But this general reverence was without any very definite knowledge of him *i.e.* his life, work and teaching, as these things are not in the Koran. As for his direct acquaintance with Christianity, it could not have begun earlier than his study of the English language and his intercourse with the English people, but from the start he must have looked with hesitation, if not suspicion, at the orthodox version of it as he was already acquainted with the one given in the Koran. Whether it was due to this or to

any other reason, he wanted to study both the Old and the New Testament in their original languages, *viz.* the Hebrew and the Greek, and thus to know whether these books were genuine or full of interpolations as alleged by Mohammad and his followers.

Though he may not have found the study of the Hebrew language very difficult owing to his knowledge of both Persian and Arabic, a proper study of these scriptures in the original must have been certainly a hard task for him. Hence the study of these languages in those days, for the sole purpose of studying the Scriptures of the Christian Religion, shows the great quest after truth that was in him, and also how thorough-going and painstaking he was in his study of religion, and thus it stands out as a most remarkable fact in his life, a fact which is unique in the whole history of Modern India. Of the result of these studies or "researches" as he calls them, we learn for the first time from his letter to Mr. Digby quoted above, written in the year 1820.

Thus in the first quarter of the nineteenth century soon after his *vanprasthashram* began, Ram Mohun Roy was in the remarkable position which no other Hindu had ever attained before him, nor has any one else even after him in spite of his example, and which perhaps few in the whole world have attained before or since, *viz.* of having made a thorough, comprehensive and comparative study of three of the greatest religions of the world, *viz.* Hinduism, Mohammedanism and Christianity. Moreover these three include in them to a certain extent Buddhism, Jainism and Judaism, the first two going with Hinduism and the last with Christianity and Mohammedanism. It is this singular character and position of his as a seeker of truth that has justly entitled him to be the founder and originator of the Science of Comparative Religion. Of course, it is not meant to say here that there was no such thing as Comparative Religion in the world before this, for it is as old as the world itself and wherever man has met man, nation met nation, there have been some, and among them great men such as Plato, Philo, Clement, Origen, etc., in the west, and men like Nanak, Kabir, etc. in India in more recent times, who have risen above the strife and conflict common among the generality of mankind to a view of things and religions, which finds in then harmony, order and unity instead of discord and disunion. Thus eclective systems and synthetic religions have sprung up all over the world from times immemorial and philosophers and

mystics have vied with one another in seeing harmony and unity. But although there were such eclectic philosophies and even religions, it is doubtful if things had come to that state where there could be a science of these religions. Perhaps the time for such a thing had not come, and it was in the present age only, an age pre-eminently of science, that there could be one.

We have seen above that Ram Mohun Roy was convinced of the moral superiority of the Christian Precepts over all others, and hence he wanted to lay them before his countrymen, for whose moral and spiritual uplift he was working all these years. He had set out as a religious seeker and inquirer, and whatever new truths he found he laid them before his people. Accordingly after his study of the Christian Religion was ripe, he collected the precepts, parables, etc. of Jesus together and published them in the year 1820, with the title "The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness." This collection has a very small introduction and it is thus that it begins :

> "A conviction in the mind of its total ignorance of the nature and of the specific attributes of the Godhead, and a sense of doubt respecting the real essence of the soul, give rise to feelings of great dissatisfaction with our limited powers, as well as with all human acquirements which fail to inform us on these interesting points. On the other hand, a notion of the existence of a supreme superintending power, the Author and Preserver of this harmonious system, who has organized and who regulates such an infinity of celestial and terrestrial objects, and a due estimation of that law which teaches that man should do unto others as he would wish to be done by, reconcile us to human nature, and tend to render our existence agreeable to ourselves and profitable to the rest of mankind. The former of these sources of satisfaction, *viz.*, a belief in God, prevails generally, being derived either from tradition and instruction, or from an attentive survey of the wonderful skill and contrivance displayed in the words of nature. The latter, although it is partially taught also in every system of religion with which I am acquainted, is principally inculcated by Christianity. This essential characteristic of the Christian religion I was for a long time unable to distinguish as such, amidst the various doctrines I found insisted upon in the

writings of the Christian authors, and in the conversation of those teachers of Christianity with whom I have had the honour of holding communication."

Further on at the end of the introduction he says as follows:

"I feel persuaded that by separating from the other matters contained in the New Testament, the moral principles found in that book, these will be more likely to produce the desirable effect of improving the hearts and minds of men of different persuasions and degrees of understanding. For, historical, and some other passages are liable to the disputes and doubts of freethinkers and anti-christians, especially miraculous relations, which are much less wounderful than the fabricated tales handed down to the natives of Asia, and consequently would be apt, at best, to carry Little weight with them. On the contrary, moral doctrines, tending evidently to the maintenance of the peace and harmony of mankind at large, are beyond the reach of metaphysical perversion and intelligible alike to the learned and to the unlearned. This simple code of religion and morality is so admirably calculated to elevate men's ideas to high and liberal nations of God, who has equally snbmitted all living creatures, without distinction of caste, rank or wealth, to change, disappointment, pain and death, and has equally admitted all to be partakers of the bountiful mercies which he has lavished over nature, and is also so well fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in the discharge of their various duties to themselves, and to society, that I cannot but hope the best effects from its promulgation in its present form."

It is in words such as these that the introduction sets forth the moral teaching or precepts of Jesus Christ as the most perfect exposition of that law which he elsewhere had called "that grand and comprehensive moral principle,—Do unto others as ye would be done by," the enunciation of which also was made by Christ. Though this forms in Ram Mohun Roy's eye the characteristic excellence of Christianity, it is not as a mere system of morality that he commends these precepts to his countrymen, but as a code of religions and morality" which is from the point of view of

religion "so admirably calculated to elevate men's ideas to high and liberal notions of God."

The compilation thus introduced is made up of selections from the four Gospels only and contains mostly those precepts and parables of Jesus Christ which are chiefly moral and religious, and those episodes and events in His career wherein His function as a teacher especially is brought out. It is true Ram Mohun Roy does not exclude those passages which show Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah or even the Son of God, but this is not the main feature of the selection, and it is in this that there lies the chief difference between this book and the Gospels and in fact the whole of the New Testament, all the books of which are written for no other purpose than to show His Messianic character or His Sonship. It was, therefore, quite in keeping with this plan of his to show Jesus Christ as the pre-eminent moral teacher that Ram Mohun omitted not only that part of the Gospels which relates to his birth, but also the account of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, all which, to say the least was like acting the play of Hamlet without the part of Hamlet, and hence was tantamount to taking away its life and soul. It was his Crucifixion that explained His life and teaching, and to omit it was to miss the entire meaning of both. Besides he excluded all the miracles that are related in the Gospels. The Gospels thus shorn of all those miracles of mercy which Jesus performed out of the infinite abundance of His love for the miserable, sick, sorrowing and sinning, and of the account of His death and resurrection, all of which in themselves from the supreme miracle of mercy wrought by the Almighty Father for the salvation of mankind, have no more their character as *Gospels*, which means good tidings, for now there is no good news of the mercy of God for sinful mankind left in them, but they are reduced only to an entirely unconnected record of His Precepts or Sayings which this compilation was, it being strictly true to its name.

We have no means of knowing what the immediate effects of the publication of these Precepts were on the mind of the people, especially the English-knowing section of it, for the translation of these into Sanskrit and Bengali as promised in the introduction for the benefit of the many, never came out. Perhaps there was nothing like a sensation among the orthodox people, who, if they at all came to know of this publication, might have naturally thought that het rodox as Ram Mohun Roy was, the next natural step for

him was to be an apostate, and they might have further consoled themselves with thinking that after all he was being seen in his true colours. Ram Mohun Roy as an apostate, for the publication of such Precepts with its introduction could be nothing less in their eyes, was far more to be preferred to his being a heretic, for now that he had turned a Ferrungee not only nominally or outwardly but in reality, adopting even the religion of the Ferrungee, there was less danger of his disturbing the Hindu orthodoxy.

CONTROVERSY WITH CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES

Whatever the effects on the Hindu side were, a thing about which we know very little, it was from another and least expected direction that a serious objection was taken to this publication, and that was from the Christian missionaries. The most important Christian missionaries in the country then were Drs. Carey and Marshman, who had started their work of preaching the Gospel as early as 1799. Of these the former who was little more than a cobbler in England before he started his work in India as a missionary, was a most remarkable man and one of the greatest missionaries of the Christian Church. Extremely poor and illiterate as he was at first, he with great faith in God and in the Gospel of Christ, not only conceived the grand idea of converting the whole of this country to Christianity but launched on this vast enterprise, one of the greatest ever undertaken, without much help from man. Not only was he not helped by the Government of India, but he even met with opposition from it which went to the length of forbidding him to work in British India. Nothing daunted by this, he established himself in Serampore, a Danish settlement, and with the help of only one or two Englishmen, began his mission-work in India. It was not that he merely conceived great plans for the salvation of India, plans some of which have not even yet been carried out by his successors, but he executed a part of them himself. Indeed he was one of the greatest pioneers of the world. Though the romantic record of his companions' lives and labours be out of place here, it may not be amiss, in order to show what kind of contemporaries Ram Mohun had, to quote a few words from the addresses given at the Centenary of the Serampore College recently celebrated, a college started by Carey and his co-workers as early as 1818, with

the avowed object of giving instruction to "Asiatic Christians and other youth in Eastern literature and European science," through the medium of the vernacular, this one thing in itself showing how highly they thought of Asiatic literatures and potentialities of the Indian vernaculars. In the Centenary report we read the following :

> "Their work had a pioneer character in an astonishing variety of directions in the interpretation of Christian obligation, in the advancement of education, primary, secondary and collegiate, in the translation of the Bible into a great variety of languages, in the development of printing and the casting of types, in the production of philological and literary work in Sanskrit, Bengali and many other Indian languages, in the foundation of periodical literature, in the cultivation of science and the encouragement of agriculture, in the abolition of social evils and the promotion of social and religous reform. Considering the time in which they lived, and their lack of early advantages, nothing is more remarkale than the breadth and far-sightedness of their interpretation of the missionary aim and motive. To them the missionary was a representative and embodiment of the philanthrophy of God in all the relationships of life." In the speech made on the occasion by the Governor of Bengal it was said among other things :
> "They produced first editions of the New Testament in more than thirty oriental languages and dialects. They printed the first books in the language of Bengal, and were the first to cultivate the language and make it the vehicle of national instruction. They published also the first vernacular newspaper in India."

It was not to be expected that such people who, staking every thing that they held dear, were preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ in its naked simplicity on such an unparalleled scale, involving necessarily an immense amount of personal sacrifice, labour and expense, should be altogether silent at what they considered to be an unwarrantable mutilation of the Gospel on the part of Ram Mohun Roy. Hence they criticised it very severely in their paper, thinking that it would "greatly injure the cause of truth." But this was not all. They failed, out of sheer bigotry, to understand the very laudable object of Ram Mohun Roy in publishing the Precepts,

which was no other than the advancement of Truth, and hence, instead of treating him as an ally according to such words of Christ Himself as "all those who are not against us are with us," they looked upon him as an enemy and hence treated him as such. They even went to the length of calling him "heathen" a word which happily is going out of use in these days. For Ram Mohun Roy, this was the beginning of another controversy, reply and counter-reply and in course of it he wrote three "Appeals to the Christian Public," in which he examined the Christian Religion from all points of view, bringing to bear upon the Christian Scriptures all his knowledge of the Hebrew language and his acute intellect.

Ram Mohun Roy began his first appeal with repudiating the term 'heathen' that was applied to him on the ground that he was "a believer in one true and living God," and "in the truths reveal-
ιι the Christian system" as well. In this connection he also defends his publication only of the Precepts and not of dogmas etc, on the sole ground of economy and reserve in order that people may learn to respect so much, and then love to learn more. After giving an account of his own renunciation of idolatry and polytheism, and belief in and public confession of one God, which fact alone should prevent any one from calling him a heathen, he pleads that since he has at least "one object in common with the Reviewer and Editor, that of procuring respect for the Precepts of Christ" they should have specially refrained from calling him so, particularly as Christ has said "He that is not against us is with us." Then he further states that the word 'moral' which he had use with regard to hese Precepts as their chief and characteristic excellence was "quite general" and applied "equally to our conduct in religious as in civil matters." But he says further "It is, however, too true to be denied that the Compiler of those moral precepts separated them from some of the dogmas and other matters, chiefly under the supposition, that they alone were a sufficient guide to secure peace and happiness to mankind at large, a position that is entirely founded on and supported by the express authority of Jesus of Nazareth, a denial of which would imply a total disavowal of Christianity."

Then further on he says as follows :

"The Compiler, finding these commandments as including all

the revealed Law, and the whole system of religion adopted by the Prophets and re-established and fulfilled by Jesus himself, as the means to acquire Peace and Happiness, was desirous of giving more full publicity in this country to them, and to the subsidiary moral doctrines that are introduced by the Saviour in detail. Placing almost implicit confidence in the truth of his sacred commandment, to the observance of which we are directed by the same teacher, "If ye love me keep my commandments," "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings," the Compiler never hesitated in declaring a belief in God and a due regard to that law "Do unto others as you would be done by," render our existence agreeable to ourselves and profitable to mankind."

Referring to the question of atonement or forgiveness of sins which had found no place in his Precepts so far, he says :

"These precepts separated from the mysterious dogmas and historical records appear, on the contrary, to the Compiler to contain not only the essence of all that is necessary to instruct mankind in their civil duties, but also the best and only means of obtaining the forgiveness of sins, the favour of God, and strength to overcome our passions and to keep his commandments. I, therefore, extract from the same compilation a few passages of that greatest of all Prophets who was sent to call sinners to repentence."

Ram Mohun Roy in these passages and others does not hesitate to call Jesus "the Saviour", "the greatest of all Prophets", "our gracious Saviour", and to call his message "the divine message of Jesus of Nazareth". But although he calls him the Saviour and says that it was for the purpose of recommending these Precepts better to his countrymen that he had separated them from other dogmatic and historical parts of the New Testament, there is no doubt that it is the Precepts or the sayings of Jesus that form for him the essence of Christianity and that he shared the same scepticism with regard to the dogmatic part, though not the historical, that he ascribes in this Appeal to Indians, both Hindu and Mohammedan, due to which he says the work of the missionaries did not make proper progress. The work

of evangelization *i.e.* the spread of Christianity, has been always a very difficult task, and all these twenty centuries a variety of ways and means of doing it have been proposed and followed, and the missionaries in India after the work of more than a century have not yet come to much definiteness about the way of doing it. The Roman Church, the Orthodox Protestants and the Liberal Protestants have all followed methods of evangelization of their own. In this connection it may be worth while to quote what Ram Mohun Roy says about the proper method of doing such work. After saying that there have been divisions among Christians themselves about these dogmas, he attributes the failure of the enthusiastic efforts of the missionaries of his time to the same cause in the follwing words :

> "But he has seen with regret that they have completely counteracted their own benevolent efforts, by introducing all the dogmas and mysteries taught in Chistian Churches to people by no means prepared to receive them and that they have been so incautious and inconsiderate in their attempts to enlighten the natives of India, as to address the instructions to them in the same way as if they were reasoning with persons brought up in a Christian country, with those dogmatical notions imbibed from their infancy. It has been owing to their beginning with the introduction of mysterious dogmas and of relations that at first sight appear incredible, that notwithstanding every exertion on the part of our divines, I am not aware that we can find a single respectable Musalman or Hindu, who was not in the common comforts of life, once glorified with the truth of Christianity, constantly adhering to it."

Though Ram Mohun Roy thus raises a serious problem as to the proper method of evangelization, the solution that he offers is not entirely acceptable in as much as he makes Christianity consist of only the Precepts as to how man should behave towards God and his brother man whereas it is principally a revelation of God's own nature and character to man and consequent communication to him of the same nature. The doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation, which were such stumbling-blocks to him owing to his Mohammedan training and bias, have real meaning only when Christianity is understood to be something more than a system of

law such as it was thought by him to be. Besides he was speaking without sufficient warrant when he said that the Hindus would not accept these dogmas, for as a matter of fact the Hindus have always believed in incarnations of God and even in a sort of Trinity. It was also due to this Mohammedan bias that he extracted comparatively very few passages from the Gospel of St. John, which has been the greatest favourite with the Hindus in general. The fact is that there was the evil of Mohammedan rationalism between his Hindu heart and Christianity with its cardinal doctrines of Incarnation and Trinity, but for which he would have seen the wonderful affinity between this Gospel and Hinduism at its best. It is due to this fact alone that all genuine Hindus are appreciating it more and more. With regard to the fact of his not having taken a sufficient number of passages from it, he says :

> "It is from this source that the most difficult to be comprehended of the dogmas of the Christian Religion have been principally drawn : and on the foundation of the passages of that writer, the interpretation of which is still a matter of keen discussion among the most learned and most pious scholars in Christendom, is erected the mysterious doctrine of three Gods in one Godhead, the origin of Mohammedanism, and the stumbling-block to the conversion of the more enlightened among the Hindus."

With regard to the reason of his publishing only the Precepts, he again says :

> "Whether or not he erred in his judgment on the point must be determined by those who will candidly persue and consider the arguments already advanced on the subject, always bearing in mind the lesson practically taught by the Saviour himself, of adapting his instructions to the susceptibilities and capacity of his hearers. John Chapter VI, Verse 12. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye can not bear them now."
>
> "Hindustan is a country, of which nearly three-fifths of the inhabitants are Hindus, and two-fifths Musalmans. Although the professors of neither of these religions are possessed of such accomplishments as are enjoyed by Europeans in general, yet the latter portion are well known to be firmly devoted to a

belief in one God, which has been instilled into their minds from their infancy. The former (I mean, the Hindus) are with a few exceptions, immersed in gross idolatry. and in belief of the most extravagant description respecting futurity, antiquity, and the miracles of their deities and saints, as handed down to them and recorded in their ancient books. Weighing these circumstances, and anxious, from his long experience of religious controversy with natives, to avoid further disputation with, them the Compiler selected those Precepts of Jesus, the obedience to which he believed most peculiarly required of a Christian, and such as could by no means tend, in doctrine, to excite the religious horror of Mohammedans, or the scoffs of Hindus. . . . . . .But as a great number of missionary gentlemen may perhaps view the matter in a different light and into the Editor of the Friend of India, in accusing the Compiler as an injurer of truth, I doubt not that with a view to avoid every possibility of such imputation, and to prevent others from attributing their ill success to his interference with their duties, he would gladly abstain from publishing again on the same subject, if he could see in past experience anything to justify hopes of their success. From what I have already stated I hope no one will infer that I feel-disposed towards the missionary establishments in the country. This is far from being the case. I pray for their augmentation, and that their members may remain in the happy enjoyment of life in a climate so generally inimical to European constitutions : for in proportion to the increase in their number, sobriety, moderation, temperance and good behaviour have been diffused among their neighbours as the necessary consequences of their company, conversation and good example."

The publication of the Precepts may not be objected to the same extent when it is meant to be an experiment in evangelization or as a first step to further evangelization as when it purports to be the essence of the Christian Religion as Ram Mohun Roy had given the impression of its being. There is not the least doubt that the Precepts of Jesus commend themselves easily and spontaneously to to the mind of unsophisticated humanity as no other system of morality does. One of the outstanding instances of this is that of Mahatma Gandhi in recent times who, as acknowledged by himself,

has received much inspiration from the Sermon on the Mount. What Ram Mohun Roy, Keshub Chunder Sen and Gandhi have felt with regard to those Precepts, innumberable men and women have felt more or less in India just as they have done all over the world ever since the days of Christ Jesus. But the main question is whether this is the whole of Christianity. From the very first, whether it was due to these unsurpassable or unequalled 'words' of his, or to his 'works', those miracles of mercy which he performed as a part of his daily life, or to the manner of his speaking his 'words' and doing his 'works', that 'authority' with which he spoke, and that 'grace and truth' with which his Person was full, or whether it was due to all these combined, each contributing its share to the general result, there is not the least doubt that the question as to his Person has been from the very first inextricably involved in that of his Precepts. The one could not be separated from the other. The question continually forced itself upon the mind of both his friends and enemies as to who he was, as we learn from not one but all the four Gospels. It was on this question that his disciples staked their all and followed him and that Jesus himself staked his all, even his life as well as the future of his work. He sealed the Precepts with his blood and through the love that he thus showed invested them with not only that authority but even divine power, without which they would have been but a dead letter or what is worse an infinitude of burden which no human being could bear for a moment. That Ram Mohun Roy was not entirely unconscious of this inseparable connection between the Precepts and the Person of Jesus Christ is evident from the following passage which he gives in reply to the charge that he had not been altogether free from introducing some dogmas. It stands thus :

> "He there states, that it is on account of these passages being such as were the ordinary foundation of the arguments of the opponents of Christianity, or the sources of intermidable controversies that have led to heart-burnings and even bloodshed among Christians, that they were not included in his selection: and they were omitted the more readily, as he considered them not essential to religion. But such dogmas, or doctrinal or other passages as are not exposed to those objections, and are not unfamiliar to the minds of those for whose benefit the compilation was intended, are generally included in conformity

with the avowed plan of the work, particularly such as seem calculated to direct our love and obedience to the beneficent Author of the universe, and to him whom he graciously sent to deliver these Precepts of Religion and morality, whose tendency is to promote universal peace and harmony."

This Appeal was replied to probably at length by the missionaries and to that he gave a further reply in a much more full and methodical manner, calling it "Second Appeal to the Christian Public".

He begins with saying that the observations of the Editor of the "Friend of India", the missionary paper, "are expressed in so mild and Christian like a style that (they)......have also encouraged me to pursue my researches after the fundamental principles of Christianity in a manner agreeable to my feelings and with such respect as I should always wish to manifest for the situation and character of so worthy a person as the Editor".

Concerning "the truth and excellency of the dogmas found in the scriptural writings" which the Editor had laboured to establish, he says that he never "has expressed the least doubt as to the truth of any part of the Gospels, and so the arguments adduced by the learned Editor to demonstrate the truth and excellence of the authority on which they rest, are, I am inclined to think, quite superfluous and foreign to the matter in question".

He says further on that "the only reason assigned by the compiler for separating the Precepts from the abstruse doctrines and miraculous relations of the Gospel, is that the former "are liable to the doubts and disputes of Free-thinkers and Anti-Christians, and the latter are capable at best of carrying little weight with the natives of this part of the globe, the fabricated tales handed down to them being of a more wonderful nature". These sentiments respecting the doctrines and miracles, founded as they are upon undeniable facts, do not, I presume, convey any disavowal or doubt of their truth. Besides, in applying the term "fabricated" to the tales received by the credulous Hindus, the Compiler clearly evinced the contemptible light in which he viewed these legends and in stating that the miracles of the Scriptures were subject to the doubts of "Free-thinkers and Anti-Christians" it can never be fairly supposed that he meant himself, or any other person

labouring in the promulgation of Christianity, to be included in that class."

Much of the controversy in this Second Appeal concerned the question of the Divinity of Jesus and the Atonement. With regard to the former of these Ram Mohun saw the vital necessity of explaining the meaning of many parts of St. John's Gospel, though he does this in the Unitarian or Socinian, sense, sometimes giving forced interpretations and at other times violating altogether the sense of the text. The unity between God and Jesus Christ that forms so great a part of this Gospel and which is given expression to in the words "I and my Father are one" he explains as one not of nature and essence but "as a subsisting concord of will and design" and as one of "perfect concord, harmony, love, obedience such as the Son evinced towards the Father, and taught the disciples to display towards the Divine Will".

In connection with the same question of unity, he makes some very significant confessions such as these :

> "For my conviction, and for the satisfaction of those who consider the Precepts of Jesus as a guide of Peace and Happiness, his word "They may be one, as we are," John XVII, verse 11, in defining the nature of unity between God and Jesus fully suffices. Disgusted with the puerile and unsociable system of Hindu idolatry, and dissatisfied at the cruelty allowed by Mussalmanism against Non-Mussalmans, I, on my searching after the truth of Christianity, felt for a length of time very much perplexed with the difference of sentiments found among the followers of Christ, (I mean Trinitarians and Unitarians, the grand division of them), until I met with the explanation of the unity given by the divine Teacher himself as a guide to peace and happiness."

Though he thus believed in the unity between Christ and God as one of will and design, and tried to explain that unity by the one that was to prevail among the disciples of Christ *i.e.* the verse "I and my Father are one" by the verse "They may be one, as we are", he believed in the Pre-existence of Christ and his superiority over the whole of creation in the same way as the Arians who formed one of the greatest sections of the early Christian heretics. This is evident from the following :

"The Scriptures indeed in several places declare, that the Son was superior even to the angels in heaven, living from the beginning of the world to eternity, and that the father created all things by him and for him. At the same time I must, in conformity to those very authorities, believe him as produced by the supreme Deity among created beings. John. Ch. V, verse 26. "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given power to the Son to have life in himself." Colossians Ch. I, verse 15. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the *first born of every creature.*"

In the first part of this Appeal, Ram Mohun Roy dealt with the question of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, whereas in the second he dealt with the question of Atonement. While in the fitst he had to do mainly with St. John's Gospel, in the latter he had to deal with St. Paul's Epistles, which form what is called the fifth Gospel, both of which he had especially avoided in his first publication *i.e.* the Precepts of Jesus. It would have been one thing if he had clearly disavowed his belief in the New Testament as the revealed scripture, but it was certainly another and a far more difficult matter when after avowing his belief in it as the scripture he had to explain or explain away the writings of those who apostles which are full of these two doctrines. Therefore, it is often by the veriest quibble or confounding the most insignificant type with the full-grown verity *e.g.* in the following quotation, that he escapes from the belief held out by the Scripture. In trying to reply to the argument that it was because Jesus saved us by his death from our sins that he was called the Saviour as no one else was called before or after him, he says as follows :

"We find the title "Saviour" applied frequently in the divine writings to those persons who had been endued with the power of saving people, either by inculcating doctrines, or affording protection to them, though none of them atoned for the sins of mankind by their death. Obadiah, verse 21. "And *saviours* shall come up on the Mount Zion to judge the amount of Essau and the kingdom shall be the Lord's." Nehemiah IX. 27. "And according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them *saviours,* who saved them out of the hand of their enemies."

2 Kings XIII. 5. "The Lord gave Israel a *saviours*, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians."

This is indeed confounding a drop with an ocean, a most insignificant type or figure with its perfect antitype or reality, for none of the prophets, however great, not even Moses or Isaish or any other, was ever called the *saviour*, a title which has been pre-eminently that of Him Crucified. In fact much of the reasoning in all these parts is of the kind which explains the higher by the lower and not *vice versa* as it ought to be. But short of this vicarious atonement and the divinity of Jesus Christ, Ram Mohun Roy believed in him as not only the greatest of Prophets who came to reveal the will of God and make the Law of Moses perfect but as the expected Messiah, not hesitating to call him repeatedly the Saviour, the Son of God as well as Redeemer, Mediator and Intercessor as is evident from the following passage :

"The Revered Editor might have spared the arguments he has adduced to prove that Jesus was sent into this world as the long-expected Messiah, intended to suffer death and difficulties like other prophets who went before him as the Editor may find in the compilation in question, as well as in its defence, Jesus of Nazareth represented as "The Son of God", a term synonymous with that of Messiah, the highest of all the Prophets : and his life declares him to have been, as represented in the Scriptures, pure as light, innocent as a lamb, necessary for eternal life as bread for temporal one, and great as the angles of God, or rather greater than they. He also might have omitted to quote authority as shows, that Christ, being a mediator between God and men "declared that whatever they (his Apostles) shall ask in his name, the Father will give them :" for, the compiler in his defence of the Precepts, repeatedly acknowledged Christ as the Redeemer, Mediator and Intercessor with God, in behalf of his followers. But such intercession does not, I presume, tend to prove the deity or the atonement of Jesus, as interpreted by the Editor, for God is represented in the sacred books to have often shown mercy to mankind for righteous man's sake. How much more, then, would he naturally manifest his favour towards those who

might petition him in the name of one whom he anointed and exalted over all creatures and prophets ?"

This is nothing less than a full confession of his faith which amounts to Unitarian Christianity, which Ram Mohun Roy henceforward began openly to profess. The Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and the Atonement of man's sin through His sacrifice on the cross were rejected by him along with the Socinians and Unitarians and also Mohammedans who stumble just in these two things. After thus professing his faith in Unitarianism, he proceeds to show how it was under the influence of the polytheistic people like the Greeks and the Roman chiefly that Trinitarianism prevailed, and expresses a hope that now that light and liberty have dawned upon Europe, Unitarianism will surely vanquish Trinitarian Christianity, the perfect vanity of which hope has not only been proved during the century since he wrote this appeal, but was realized to some extent even by Ram Mohun Roy himself when he went to England and saw the great moral and spiritual difference that there existed between the Unitarians and the Trinitarians, not in favour of the former as he may have well supposed but in that of the latter, a fact which led him to seek the fellowship of the orthodox more and more. But so far this deistic dualism of his early Mohammedan training was still predominant in his mind. and the last and worst argument that he could bring against Trinitarian Christianity, an argument that he brought again and again, was that this kind of belief resembled Hinduism, a fact which, provided Christianity were in itself true, should have commended it the more to him, as it actually has done to some since, for the doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation that one finds in Hinduism and that form so great a part of both popular and higher Hinduism are only dim forebodings and premonitions of the full truth as it exists in Christianity. Again it is due to the same influence of his early training that he misses altogether the very unity of Christ with God which is such a characteristic feature of both His teaching and belief, and which has attracted most of the religiously-minded people of modern India. It is especially this which has made many of them and particularly Keshub Chunder Sen, Ram Mohun Roy's own great successor, interpret Christ's life and teachings from the Vedantic standpoint when he set himself to the

task of giving an essentially Indian or Hindu interpretation of Christ as in his great lecture "India asks, who is Christ".

With regard to the fact as to why he had not given the miracles in his compilation of the Precepts of Jesus, he again says :

> "Under these circumstances, and from the experience that nothing but the sublimity of the Precepts of Jesus had at first drawn the attention of the Compiler, and excited his veneration for the author of this religion, without aid from miraculous relations, he omitted in his compilation the mention of the miracles performed by Jesus, without meaning to express doubt of their authenticity or intending to slight them by such an omission."

After this he enters into the question of the Personality of the Holy Spirit which he denies, saying that the Holy Ghost is only an influence of God "by which spiritual blessings are conveyed to mankind designated in the scriptures as the Comforter, Spirit of Truth or Holy Spirit." While speaking of this, he incidentally brings out his belief in the immaculate conception of Jesus Christ. He says :

> "On the other hand if we understand by these passages, merely that the miraculous influence of God came upon Mary, so that, though a virgin, she bore a child, everything would stand consistent with our belief of the Divine power, without shocking our ideas of the purity of the Deity, inculcated alike by reason and revelation."

He ends his second Appeal with an Appeddix, his last words being these :

> "I am, however, most firmly convinced, that Christianity is entirely free from every trace of Polytheism, whether gross or refined. I therefore enjoy the approbation of my conscience in publishing the Precepts of this Religion as the source of Peace and Hapiness."

In this work he tries to vindicate not only his own publication of the Precepts of Jesus as the sole Guide to Peace and Happiness,

but Christianity itself as he understood it against those whom he thought to be its false interpreters. From this time forth Ram Mohun Roy stood before both the orthodox Christians and his countrymen as an advocate of Unitarian Christianity.

UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY

While carrying on this controversy with these missionaries, Ram Mohun Roy was engaged in translating the Gospels into the Bengali language as he found the one made by Carey abounding "in the most flagrant violation of native idiom," in close co-operation with Messrs. Adam and Yates who belonged to the same mission as that of Carey. They already published the Sermon on the Mount separately, and they had finished the Gospel of Matthew when Rev. Yates refused to help them any more. It was while translating the very first few verses of the fourth Gospel that a serious difference arose between Adam and Yates, while during the discussion Ram Mohun as mentioned by Mr. Adam, "sat, pen in hand, in dignified reticence, looking on listening, observing all, but saying nothing." After Mr. Yates withdrew Ram Mohun Roy and Adam continued, and this work of theirs as well as the controversy between Ram Mohun Roy and the missionaries seems to have changed Mr. Adam's mind from Trinitarianism to Unitarianism, which fact was made public in the year 1821. As to how this change took place in Adam's mind, we learn from his own letter to a friend, wherein he writes as follows :

> "It is now several months since I began to entertain some doubts respecting the supreme Deity of Jesus Christ, suggested by frequent discussions with Ram Mohun Roy, whom I was endeavouring to bring over to the belief of that doctrine, and in which I was joined by Mr. Yates, who also professed to experience difficulties on the subject. Since then I have been diligently engaged in studying afresh the Scriptures with a view to this subject, humbly seeking divine guidance and illumination, and I do not hesitate to confess that I am unable to remove the weighty objections which present themselves against this doctrine. I do not mean to say that there are no difficulties in rejecting it, but the objections against it compared

with the arguments for it, appear to me like a mountain compared with a molehill."

Naturally so singular an event as this turning of Mr. Adam from a Trinitarian to an Unitarian produced a very great sensation, and this change from orthodoxy to heresy of one of their own missionaries as a result of the controversy with Ram Mohun Roy whom they had once called "heathen", the Baptist missionaries *viz.*, Carey and Marshman may well attribute to the devil who was counteracting their efforts in the spread of the Kingdom of God in India and had already succeeded to a certain extent in thwarting them; and coupled as this change was with the name Adam, they did not hesitate to call him even "the second fallen Adam". If the missionaries may have thus seen the presence and influence of the devil in Mr. Adam's contact with Ram Mohun Roy and his consequent change of belief, Ram Mohun Roy too saw the presence of the same, of course in a rationalistic way, in another incident that happened at about this time. This was his interview with Bishop Middleton, the first Anglican Bishop of India. This Bishop had called him and then had entered into a long argument to peasuade him to accept Christianity, and not content with this singular stretch of the hand of hospitality, had wound up by expatiating on "the grand career which would open to him by a change of faith". "He would be honoured in life and lamented in death,—honoured in England as well as in India. His name would descend to posterity as that of the modern Apostle of India." He said to Ram Mohun Roy things like this as we learn from the English biography of the latter. The exact date of this conversation is not known but it was some time between 1820 and 1824 in which year the Bishop died. As the English biographer puts it, "the Bioshop's meaning was doubtless innocent enough," but Ram Mohun Roy was very highly incensed at this way of putting the claims of Christianity before him. It is quite possible that the Bishop being an orthodox Christian could not understand any man in India, where such rationalism as was then coming into existence in Europe was unknown, going as far as Ram Mohun Roy did by way of publishing his Precepts of Jesus and making an open confession of Unitarian Christianity without going the full length of orthodox Christianity, and so perhaps thinking that it was some unworthy motive which was keeping him back, he might have suggested that Ram Mohun

Roy as a Christian had a mission and destiny which even the highest of the high among Europeans may not have even dared to aspire after. To be an apostle of India was not a thing bad in itself, and Ram Mohun's own successor Keshub Chunder Sen, in giving to himself the highest place and title he could think of could do no more than call himself and his fellow-workers 'Hindu apostles of Christ.' But if the thing in itself was not wrong, it was perhaps the way of looking at it and putting it that constituted the offence. It is only an apostolic man that can suggest an apostolical career to others. Unfortunately this first Bishop of the English Church in India was an entirely officialized person, who was more busy with his own place of honour next to the Governor-General than with the spread of Christianity in India and such a suggestion coming as it did from him must have about it a great deal of official air which could not but be offensive to Ram Mohun Roy. Whatever it be, he found in it an additional reason against Orthodox Christianity, a prejudice which was removed only when he saw it at its best in England.

So far as the personal faith of Ram Mohun Roy was concerned at this time, he had openly acknowledged himself as a Unitarian Christian, which was certainly a much more advanced position than the one taken in the Precepts. Now that Mr. Adam had joined him, they both set themselves to work in earnest for the spread of Unitarianism in India. In the year 1821, they formed a regular Committee of European and Indian gentlemen, the latter of whom were, besides Ram Mohun Roy, Dwarkanath Thakur, Prasanna Kumar Thakur and Radha Prasad Roy, all these being men of light and leading not only in Calcutta but in the whole of Bengal. The Committee was called the Calcutta Unitarian Committee. The objects and methods of this Unitarian organization are described thus by Miss Collect in her biography of Ram Mohun :

> "Proselytism", Mr. Adam explains, "is not our immediate object. We aim to remove ignorance and superstition, and to furnish information respecting the evidences, the duties and the doctrines of the religion of Christ". The methods chosen were "education, rational discussion, and the publication of books both in English and in the native languages". In January, 1832, Mr. Adam writes that he with the assistance of a few friends rented a house in which Christian worship is

among the followers of Christ, since many lovers of truth are zealously engaged in rendering the religion of Jesus free from corruptions.

"It is . . . a great satisfaction to my conscience to find that the doctrines inculcated by Jesus and his Apostles are quite different from those human inventions which the missionaries are persuaded to profess, and entirely consistent with reason and the revelation delivered by Moses and the prophets. I am, therefore, anxious to support them, even at the risk of my own life. I rely much on the force of truth, which will, I am sure, ultimately prevail. Our number is comparatively small, but I am glad to inform you that none of them can be justly charged with the want of zeal and prudence.

"I wish to add, in order that you may set me right, if you find me mistaken,—my view of Christianity is that in representing all mankind as the children of one eternal Father, it enjoins them to love one another, without making any distinction of country, caste, colour or creed."

He writes to the same with regard to their work in India a little later as follows :

"Although our adversaries are both numerous and zealous, as the adversaries of truth have always been, yet our prospects are by no means discouraging, if we only have the means of following up what has already been done. We confidently hope that, through these various means the period will be acc:'e ated, when the belief in the Divine Unity and the mission of Christ will universally prevail."

It is rather strange but none the less true that such a strong and enthusiastic hope that the mission of Christ will universally prevail was extinguished in his heart only a few months later, for we read in a letter written to one Mr. Samuel Smith the following words :

"Form the disappointment which we have met in our endeavour to promote the cause of Unitarianism, I scarcely entertain any hope of success."

HINDU CHRISTIAN CONTROVERSY

Though Ram Mohun Roy had identified himself altogether with the work of spreading Unitarianism in India, it is of course not to be supposed that he had ceased to be a Hindu theist. That his Unitarianism or as it may be better called Christian Theism was complimentary to or only the perfect form of that theism which he had found in the Hindu Scriptures, particularly the Vedas, is evident from a minor controversy that he was carrying on during these years with the missionaries under the pseudonym of his pundit Shiv Prasad Sarma. He did this sometimes and perhaps was in special need of doing it in this case inasmuch as he was at this time too closely identified with Unitarian Christianity. The cause of this controversy was an attack made by the Baptist missionaries on Hinduism in general and on Vedantism in particular. This together with the main end which was aimed at, *viz.*, proselytism, aroused the indignation and even the animosity of Ram Mohun Roy, and he brought out, during the course of two or three years that this controversy lasted, four numbers of what he called "The Brahamanical Magazine, or the Missionary and the Brahmin, being a vindication of the Hindu Religion against the attack of Christian missionaries." This pamphlet, (it may now well be called so), including the two prefaces that he later on attached to the numbers is of about 50 pages, and is of a defensive as well as offensive character. While the defensive part follows more or less the line of his previous controversies with the Hindus themselves in his defence of what he called Hindu Theism, the offensive part follows that of his usual controversy with the missionaries in his defence of the Precepts of Jesus, though of course in this his last campaign he carries the warfare further into his opponents camp than he had done previously.

In the preface to the second edition of the same with regard to the object that he set before himself in writing this, he says :

> "In the first number of the Magazine I replied to the arguments they adduced against the Shastras, or immediate explanations of the Vedas, our original Sacred Books : and in the second I answered the objections urged against the Puranas and Tantras, or Historical Illustrations of the Hindu Mythology, showing that the doctrines of the former are much more

rational than the religion which missionaries profess, and that those of the latter, if unreasonable, are not more so than their Christian faith."

He says a little further on that his object is not to oppose Christianity, but to be left in undisturbed possession of his own faith, or at best to be convinced of the superiority of Christianity by argument and not by abuse :

"It is well-known to the whole world, that no people on earth are more tolerant than the Hindus, who believe all men to be equally within the reach of Divine beneficence, which embraces the good of every religious sect and denomination : therefore, it cannot be imagined that my object in publishing this magazine was to oppose Christianity."

In the Preface to the first edition, he complain of the violation of the religious neutrality promised by the British which, he says, is constituted in the following acts of the missionary :

"The first way is that of publishing and distributing among the natives various books, large and small, reviling both religious, (*i.e.*, Hinduism and Mohammedanism), and abusing and ridiculing the gods and saints of the former : the second way is that of standing in front of the doors of the natives or in the public roads to preach the excellency of their own religion and debasedness of that of others : the third way is that if any natives of low origin become Christians from the desire of gain or from any other motives, these gentlemen employ and maintain them as a necessary encouragement to others to follow their example."

He says further on in continuation of the same as follows :

"It is true that the apostles of Jesus Christ used to preach the superiority of the Christian religion to the natives of different countries. But we must recollect that they were not of the rulers of those countries where they preached. Were the missionaries likewise to preach the Gospel and distribute books in countries not conquered by the English, such as Turkey, Persia,

etc., which are much nearer England, they would be esteemed a body of men truly zealous in propagating religion and in the following the example of the founders of Christianity. In Bengal, where the English are the sole rulers, and where the mere name of Englishman is sufficient to frighten people, an encroachment upon the rights of her poor, timid and humble inhabitants and upon their religion cannot be viewed in the eyes of God or the public as a justifiable act. We have been subjected to such insults for about nine centuries, and the cause of such degradation has been our excess in civilization and the abstinence from the slaughter even of animals : as well as our division into castes, which has been the source of want of unity among us."

Further on he says :

"But as the English are celebrated for the manifestation of humanity and for administering justice, and as a great many gentlemen among them are noticed to have had an aversion to violate equity it would tend to destroy their acknowledged character if they follow the example of the former savage conquerors indisturbing the established religion of the country, because to introduce a religion by means of abuse and insult, or by affording the hope of worldly gain, is inconsistent with reason and justice. If by the force of argument they can prove the truth of their own religion and the falsity of that of Hindus, many would of course embrace their doctrines, and in case they fail to prove this, they should not undergo such useless trouble, nor tease Hindus any longer by their attempts at conversion."

The arguments advanced here raise a very important question, or rather a series of questions which are engaging, particularly during the last decade or so, the most serious attention of a few of the most thoughtful among missionaries and indigenous Christian leaders in India and in other countries such as Japan and China, for there too, while the relationship of the white and the non-white races is not the same as in India, it is certainly of a kind which is not free from the predominance of the white races. During the last century or two, wherever Christianity has gone, it has been closely

associated with Western Civilization and in some countries with Imperialism as in India. These constitute the main stumbling-blocks in the way of Christianity and it has often been made to serve as a handmaid in the work of extending and consolidating European Civilization, Capitalism and Imperialism. Owing to this, Christianity comes to-day to these countries as a way of gain and not of godliness which it essentially is. Most people who join it do so for the material gain that they get from it rather than for its spiritual value which alone makes it the divine thing it is, and where it has gone in its pure form it has involved suffering and even crucifixion in the manner of Jesus Christ himself instead of worldly profit.

Hence the objection to mission-work and especially to proselytism, under the circumstances in which it has been carried on in India, is a fundamental one. Is proselytising in the best sense of the term possible without persecution ? This is the question which the most thoughtful among Christians are beginning to put to themselves, and a proper answer to it will lead to a separation from the Christian faith of the non-essentials and will show in what exactly it is that the Kingdom of Heaven lies. During a full century that has passed since Ram Mohun Roy raised this question, a great deal of work has been done by Christian Missions and Churches, but all such work, to take it at its best, is more of the nature of preparation for than establishment of the Kingdom of God itself, *i.e.*, it is more like the work of John the Baptist than that of Jesus Christ himself. To this work Ram Mohun Roy and the school of thought that he founded with its grert leaders such as Devendranath Tagore and more particularly Keshub Chunder Sen have contributed as much as the large number of missionaries themselves, and though both these agencies worked on different lines and at times even opposed each other, the work of both was equally helpful. What is needed now is a union of these two streams of thought and life, an union which, though it may be found to take place among very few at first, is sure to spread over larger and larger numbers until it will take hold of the whole land and ultimately may show the Kingdom of Heaven as among the Hindus in a new light to the whole world to the lasting good thereof.

In all probability it was this proselytising work of the Chrisian missionaries which gave a different turn to the religious work of Ram Mohun Roy and was the cause of his starting the Brahma Sabha which came to be called the Brahma Samaj a few years

later. Ram Mohun had already declared himself a Unitarian and was doing his best to spread it in India, a task for which he had started the Unitarian mission at a large cost to himself. In this work he was thwarted by the orthodox among the Hindus, but much more by the orthodox Christians. In addition to this there came these wanton attacks on the part of Christian missionaries on the Hindu religion, followed by a systematic propaganda and proselytism. Ram Mohun Roy objected to this mainly on the ground that the Christian missionaries ought not to do this inasmuch as they belonged to the same race and land as the conquerors of the country, and he feared that this would reduce their proselytising work more or less to the level of what was done by the Mohammedans when they were in power in India. His fear was that this might lead a number of poorer and middle class but indigent Hindus to adopt the Christian faith, not from any conviction but from need and necessity, and thereby permanent harm might be done to the Hindu community. In this connection in the Number IV of the same magazine which is the last of the series, he says :

> "Since the Hindu population in Bengal, from the circumstances of their early marriages, and their continual residence either at home or at an inconsiderable distance from their birth-place. and from the enjoyment of local comfort under the peaceful sway of the British nation, has been increasing with uncommon rapidity, and as they are, at the same time, prohibited from foreign trade by their religious prejudices, prevented from entering into the military service owing to their habitual aversion to the war, and do not now, as in former times, receive gifts of land free from assessments which tended much to encourage an idle life, many families have become very indigent and a greater number must, sooner or later, be reduced to poverty. It is, therefore, more than probable, that the most weak and needy among them may be induced, by the hope of worldy advantages, to sell their conscience and their religion in the same manner as a great many Israelites have been persuaded to profess Christianity, by the severe policy adopted towards Jews on the one hand, and the encouragement to apostatize held out on the other, by societies established in Europe for their conversion."

It is to this fear of apostasy of large classes of people, particularly among the poor, a fear not without foundation as has been amply proved by the history of the mission-work done in the past hundred years, that the change in the religious position of Ram Mohun Roy which ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Brahma Samaj may be traced. The very first indication of this may be seen in the passage which immediately follows the one quoted above, a passage in which Ram Mohun gives expression to his creed which may be called Hindu Theism and which closes the whole series. He says therein :

> "I shall now, in a few words, for the information of the Missionary Gentlemen, lay down our religious creed. In conformity with the Precepts of our ancient religion, contained in the Holy Vedant, though disregarded by the generality of moderns, we look up to the One Being as the animating and regulating principle of the whole collective body of the universe, and as the origin of all individual souls which in a manner somewhat similar, vivify and govern their particular bodies : and we reject Idolatry in every form and under whatsoever veil of sophistry it may be practised, either in adoration of an artificial, a natural, or an imaginary object. The divine homage which we offer, consists solely in the practice of *Daya* or benevolence towards each and not in a fanciful faith or in certain motions of the feet, legs, arms, head, tongue or other bodily organs, in pulpit or before a temple. Among other objects, we frequently offer up our humble thanks to God, for the blessings of British Rule in India and sincerely pray, that it may continue in its beneficent operations for centuries to come."

Thus was taking place the transition from "the Precepts of Jesus" which Ram Mohun Roy was holding up for the past few years as the absolute standard in morals and religion, for all nations and peoples, to "the Precepts of our ancient religion contained in the holy Vedant" which he under the pseudonym of his Pundit Shiv Prasad Sarma now holds up before the missionaries as the religion of the new reformers. This was due largely to the fear mentioned above. Another indication and a very noteworthy one, of the same change is seen in another tract that Ram Mohun wrote

about this time under the pseudonym of his friend Prasanna Kumar Tagore, a tract which he addressed to his countrymen and which was entitled "Humble suggestions to his countrymen who believe in the One True God." The object of publishing it is said to be as follows :

> "My object in publishing this tract is to recommend those to whom it is addressed, to avoid using harsh or abusive language in their religious intercourse with European Missionaries, either respecting them or the objects of their worship, however much this may be countenanced by the example of some of these gentlemen."

The following is the substance of the tract itself, which is a very small one and in which Ram Mohun has drawn up what may be called the creed of the Brama Samaj as well as its relation to different religious bodies.

> "Those who firmly believe on the authority of the Vedas, that God is "one *only* without an equal," and that "He cannot be known either through the medium of language, thought or vision : how can he be known except as existing, *the origin and support of the universe* ?"—and who endeavour to regulate their conduct by the following precept, "He who is desirous of enternal happiness should regard another as he regards himself, and the happiness and misery of another as his own," ought to manifest the warmest affection towards such of their own countrymen as maintain the same faith and practice, even although they have not all studied the Vedas for themselves, but have professed a belief in God only through an acquaintance with their general design. Many among the ten classes of Sannyasins, and all the followers of Guru Nanak, of Dadu, and of Kabir, as well as of Santa, etc. profess the religious sentiments abovementioned. It is our unquestionable duty invariably to treat them as our brethren. No doubt should be entertained of their future salvation, merely because they receive instruction, and practise their sacred music, in the vernacular dialect."
>
> "Amongst foreigners, those Europeans who believe God to be in every sense One, and Worship him alone in spirit, and

who extend their benevolence to man us the highest service to God, should be regarded by us with affection, on the ground of the object of their worship being the same as ours. We should feel no reluctance to co-operate with them in religious matters, merely because they consider Jesus Christ as the messenger of God and their Spiritual Teacher : for oneness in the object of worship and sameness of religious practice should produce attachment between the worshippers."

"Amongst Europeans, those who believe Jesus Christ to be God himself, and conceive him to be possessed of a particular form, and maintain Father, Son and Holy Ghost to be one God, should not be treated in an unfriendly manner. On the contrary, we should act towards them in the same manner as we act towards those of our countrymen who without forming any external image, meditate upon Rama and other supposed incarnations, and believe in their unity."

"Again, those amongst Europeans who believing Jesus Christ to be the Supreme Being moreover construct various images of him, should not be hated. On the contrary, it becomes us to act towards those Europeans in the same manner as we act towards such as believe Rama etc., to be incarnations of God, and form external images of them. For the religious principles of the two last-mentioned sects of foreigners are one and the same with those of the two similar sects among Hindoos, although they are clothed in a different garb."

"When any belonging to the second and third classes of Europeans endeavours to make converts of us, the believers in the only living and true God, even then we should feel no resentment towards them, but rather compassion, on account of their blindness to the errors into which they themselves have fallen since it is almost impossible, as everyday's experience teaches us, for men when possessed of wealth and power, to perceive their own defects."

These are some of the chief principles that have guided the working of the Brahma Samaj for the last hundred years or so, and which came to be enunciated by Ram Mohun Roy as part of a new programme in religious reform that he was setting before himself and his country owing to the proselytising character of the work of

the English and European missionaries in India. The seed of the Brahma-Sabha was sown here, though the Sabha was actually started about 5 years later.

UNITARIAN AND TRINITARIAN CONTROVERSY

Meanwhile Ram Mohun's main controversy with the missionaries, which the publication of his Precepts of Jesus had started some years back, was going on as vigorously as ever. His Second Appeal was replied to by Dr. Marshman elaborately, and Ram Mohun replied to it in the same manner in a book of about 200 pages. It was called the *Final Appeal to the Christian Public in Defence of the Precepts of Jesus.* This work was printed at what is called "the Unitarian Press," particularly as Ram Mohun Roy was refused the printing of it by the Baptist Misson Press which hitherto published his first two Appeals.

In the Preface to this Appeal he mentions the various objects with which he pursues this controversy, though it has lost him some friends and has prevented him from rendering other services to his countrymen by means of his publications in the vernacular etc. These objects are I. to convince those Christians who already believe in the revelation of the Bible of the truth of what he considers to be the true interpretation thereof, II. to make those who are indifferent about religion to "devote their minds to the investigation and discovery of truth," III. and "to solicit the patient attention of such individuals as are rather unfavourable to the doctrines of Christianity as generally promulgated from finding them at variance with common sense, that they may examine and judge whether its doctrines are really such as they are understood to be by the popular opinion which now prevails." In order to advance this threefold object, more than half of which is even missionary in its character, he even promised in the same to start a monthly publication, "to be devoted to Biblical Criticism, and to subject Unitarian as well as Trinitarian doctrines to the test of fair argument." He even invites the missionaries to this task asking them to prove their doctrine "beginning with the book of Genesis" to the end of the Bible, himself volunteering to pay all the expenses of such publication.

In the Introductory Remarks to the Book itself he says that it is not he who has started this controversy, but that it has been

forced on him by the Reverend Editor of the Friend of India. He says : "I beg to call the attention of the public to the language of the Introduction to "The Precepts of Jesus" compiled by me, and which was my first publication connected with Christianity. They may observe therein, that so far from teaching any "opposite doctrines," or, "rejecting the prevailing opinions held by the great body of Christians," I took every precaution against giving the least offence to the prejudices of any one, and consequently limited my labour to what I supposed best calculated for the improvement of those whose received opinions are widely different from those of Christians." He says further on that as this publication of the Precepts of Jesus was taken exception to, and as he was reproached and censured by the Editor of the "Friend of India," he issued his first Appeal with regard to which he says : "In that appeal I carefully avoided entering into any discussion as to the doctrines held up as the fundamental principles of Christianity by the Editor." He says further on that when the Editor of the "Friend of India" in his review of this First Appeal introduced subjects concerning Atonement etc. he had to defend his own position with regard to them in his second Appeal, and that is how he came to discuss them. In all this he means to say that he did not begin the discussion concerning these subjects, particularly as it might wound the feelings of many among Christians, but that he was compelled to do it by the Missionaries themselves.

Coming to the body of the book itself, Ram Mohun Roy at first discusses in detail the doctrine of Atonement, with regard to which he gives his own explanation instead of the received interpretation as among the orthodox Christians as follows :

> "To avoid such a stigma upon the pure religion of Jesus, it is incumbent, I think, upon us to follow the latter mode of interpretation, and to understand from the passages referred to, that Jesus, the spiritual Lord and King of Jews and Gentiles, in fulfilment of the duties of his mission, exposed his own life for the benefit of his subjects, purged their sins by his doctrines, and presevered in executing the commands of God, even to the undergoing of bodily suffering in the miserable death of the cross—a self-devotion or sacrifice, of which no Jewish high-priest had offered example."

Concerning the same he says further on :

> "Hence, it appears more consistent with the context and the general tenor of scripture, to understand by the phrase, "The offering of the body of Jesus Christ," the death of Jesus as a spiritual and virtual sacrifice for the sins of all those for whom he became a mediator inasmuch as by that death the blessed saviour testified his perfect obedience and devotion to the will of his heavenly Father, and thereby vindicated to himself the unlimited favour of God. During his life he instructed mankind how they might render themselves worthy of the Divine mercy : by his death he qualified himself to be their intercessor at the heavenly throne, when sincere repentence was offered by them instead of perfect duty. We may easily account for the adoption by the apostles, with respect to him, of such terms as sacrifice and atonement for sin, and their representing Jesus as the high-priest, engaged to take away the sins of the world by means of his blood. These were modes of speech made use of in allusion to the sacrifices and blood-offerings which the Jews and their high-priest used to make for the remission of sins and the apostles wisely accommodated their instructions to the ideas and forms of language familiar to those whom they addressed."

It is in this way that Ram Mohun Roy explains or explains away to a certain extent the true significance of the death of Jesus Christ which has held such an important place in all Christian thinking and influenced and inspired much of the very best and highest action in the lives of the true followers of Jesus Christ these twenty centuries. Love is the last term in the moral and religious vocabulary of man, and all true love logically ends or is synonymous with sacrifice, and it is by this that the death of Jesus Christ has to be interpreted and understood. The Cross is the consummation of the life of Jesus, and it is by that that His whole life is to be understood and not *vice versa* as that would be explaining the higher by the lower. The vicarious death of Jesus is a new category in the religious thinking of the world and as such it explains not only his whole life better but gives a meaning to a very large part of the inner history of man, explaining at the same time the work of God therein.

Next he takes up the question of Trinity and deals with it at length trying to refute all the arguments advanced thereupon by the Editor of the "Friend of India." Most of his arguments are the same as those of the Unitarians in the west, and turn on the verbal interpretation of those verses of the Bible which have been looked upon by orthodox Christians as sanctioning their Trinitarian belief. Leaving this exegetical part of the controversy, one may say that it was at this fundamental fact which is the foundation of Christianity, *viz.*, God's humiliation of Himself in His love of man, that Ram Mohun Roy along with so many philosophers in the past as well as in the present stumbled. This was a rock of offence and a stone of stumbling to him. The same thing that is said of love with regard to atonement in the last paragraph may be said with regard to this also, and whether we think of Incarnation of Atonement which are the actions of God with regard to Man, or of the Trinity which pertains to the inner life of God within Himself, it is love that will supply the key wherewith we may open the secrets of these mysterious and wonderful problems. Such a verse as this wherein it is said that "he laid aside his glory and took on himself the form of a servant" can be understood only when one understands the true meaning of love. It is of its very essence to humiliate itself to come down and to go lower than the level of those who are its objects. St. John says, God is Love. He is Love more than Power, Wisdom etc. and it is of this inmost life and essence that we have the manifestation in the life and above all in the death of Christ Jesus. That the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit and above all this mystery of mysteries, which is so only to those who are lacking in faith but which can be read by him who runs provided he has faith, that this basal fact of all true religion and life cannot be understood unless one becomes a babe is seen in the case of even such a man as Mohammud who, though he accepted Jesus Christ as the greatest of all prophets who came before himself and accepted most of his teachings, yet failed to understand just this crucifixion and the humiliation it involved for Ruh-i-Allah, *i.e.*, Christ, and consequently had recourse to the belief that Jesus was removed to Heaven while he was in prison and another person was substituted in his place on the cross. Others, among whom Ram Mohun Roy is one, while accepting this fact of the crucifixion of Christ have so interpreted it as to take away its inner meaning and value.

Ram Mohun Roy, though very strong in his understanding and interpretation of the Old Testament in which perhaps his Arabic studies helped him a good deal, was far from so with regard to the New Testament, and was at his weakest especially in his treatment of St. Paul and St. John. His was a rationalistic temperament through and through and hence the mystic teaching of both these apostles was far from congenial to him : it would seem as if he had an inherent incapacity even to understand their standpoint and vital experience which was behind it, much less to accept it. He rarely even so much as praises them, and in this he is very different from such great Indians and his own followers as Keshub Chunder Sen and Mahadev Govind Ranade, the former of whom came very close to the spiritual experiences of those two Apostles, while the latter was remarkably impressed by the fact of the conversion of St. Paul to which he justly attributed, owing to his deep insight into all historical matters, great consequences which it has produced.

To quote an example of the way in which he misunderstands the teaching of St. John as given in his Gospel, particularly that of the first verse, first chapter, which runs : In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God :

> "In the beginning : Or, from the first, *i.e.*, from the commencement of the gospel dispensation or of the ministry of Christ."
>
> "The Word was with God, He withdrew from world to commune with God, and to receive divine instructions and qualifications, previously to his public ministry."
>
> "And the Word was a God. "Was God," Newcome. Jesus received a commission as a prophet of the Most High, and was invested with extraordinary miraculous powers. But in the Jewish phraseology they were called gods to whom the word God came."

Some of the interpretation that follows is of the same kind. That this kind of interpretation is altogether wrong can be seen at once by any ordinary student of the Bible. The fact that the Gospel of St. John teaches most clearly the Divinity of Christ is admitted by all scholars, whether orthodox or heretic, Trinitarian, or Unitarian, and the only recourse of those who find it hard to

accept that doctrine is to question the authorship of it by St. John. Not to admit the authenticity or the authority of this Gospel is a thing altogether different, but after the inspiration of it has been admitted as with Ram Mohan it is impossible to escape from the acceptance of the Divinity of Jesus Christ which is clearly proved therein, or rather to show which is the sole object of that remarkable book. Of course, it is not to be understood that much of the argument advanced in this big volume is of the same kind as shown above, for Ram Mohun was no ordinary scholar and with his knowledge of Arabic, Hebrew and Greek as well as other literature concerning Biblical criticism he was no ordinary exegete.

Though not accepting the doctrines of Atonement or of Incarnation, Ram Mohun Roy looks upon Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the Saviour, the Lord and the King, all which terms he uses again and again with reference to him in this book. While quoting Locke and Newton, with "whose sentiments as to the person of Christ" his own agree, he says with regard to Jesus "that he is the anointed Lord and King promised and sent from God, is worthy of worship for his mediation and meritorious death, but by no means as a being possessed of a twofold nature, divine and human, perfect God and perfect Man."

Ram Mohun Roy concluded his "Essay by offering up thanks to the Supreme Dispenser of the events of this universe, for having unexpectedly delivered this country from the long-continued tyranny of its former Rulers, and placed it under the government of the English—a nation who not only are blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty but also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social happiness, as well as free inquiry into literary religious subjects, among those nations to which their influence extends."

As regards the impression of this work made upon some of the thinking people among the English in India, it cannot be better summed up than in the words of the *Indian Gazette* which spoke of the Raja as "a most gigantic combatant in the theological field, a combatant who, we are constrained to say, has not met with his match here."

UNITARIAN PROPAGANDA

A few months after this final Appeal was published in the

beginning of 1824, Ram Mohun Roy wrote a long letter to an American Unitarian gentleman named Rev. Henry Ware in reply to his questions with regard to "the Prospects of Christianity and the means of promoting its reception in India," a letter from which much of the mind of Ram Mohun concerning this very important subject may be known. In the beginning of the letter he says:

> "I have now prepared such replies to these questions as my knowledge authorizes and my conscience permits and now submit them to your judgment. There is one question at the concluding past of your letter, (to wit, "Whether it is desirable that the inhabitants of India should be converted to Christianity, in what degree desirable, and for what reasons ?"), which I pause to answer, as I am led to believe, from reason which is set forth in Scripture that "in every nation he that *feareth* God and worketh *righteousness* is accepted with him", in whatever form of worship he may have been brought to glorify God. Nevertheless I presume to think, that Christianity, if properly inculcated, has a greater tendency to improve the moral and political state of mankind, than any other known religious system."

The following is the tribute he pays to America for its forwardness in the work of what he considers to be religious reform, a tribute which breathes much good will towards that great country :

> "Your country, however, in free inquiry into religious truth, excels even England, and I have, therefore, every reason to hope, that the truths of Christianity will soon, throughout the United States, triumph over the present prevailing corruptions. I presume to say, that no native of those States can be more fervent than myself in praying for the uninterrupted happiness of your country and for what I cannot but deem essential to its prosperity—the perpetual union of all the States under one general Government."

Next Ram Mohun answers the questions one by one, of which there are as many as twenty. He draws a very gloomy picture of the prospects of Christianity in India, quoting a good deal from Abbe Dubois, the great catholic missionary, who had then recently

published his remarkable book "The Hindu Manners and Customs," and in which he had said "that under existing circumstances there is no human possibility of converting the Hindoos to any sect of Christianity." Ram Mohun is more enthusiastic over and hopeful of the future of Unitarian Christianity in India, which, as he says, through its first and only Missionary in Bengal, the Rev. Mr. Adam, had "already received every countenance from several respectable European gentlemen, and from a great number of the leading part of the native community in Calcutta." Ram Mohun Roy was too modest to add his own name as the other great influence, (perhaps much greater than that of Mr. Adam inasmuch as he had been the means of converting him to Unitarianism), which had made Unitarian Christianity respectable among Indians of his time. He says that "even those who are inimical to every religion admit. that the Unitarian system is more conformable to human understanding than any other known creed." He adds that though "the sincere conversion to Trinitarian Christianity" of the educated among Indians whose number is small is "morally impossible," "they would not scruple to embrace, or at least to encourage the Unitarian system of Christianity. were it inculcated on them in an intelligible manner." In order to do this, he says, "it would be advisable, in my humble opinion, that one or two, if not more gentlemen, well qualified to teach English literature and science, and noted for their moral conduct, should be employed to cultivate the understandings of the present ignorant generation, and thereby improve their hearts. that the cause of truth may triumph over false religion, and the desired comfort and happiness may be enjoyed by men of all classes." Ram Mohun does not think much of Mission-work such as "public preachings," even though that may be done by Unitarian missionaries, nor does he expect much result from the translations of the Bible in the various vernaculars of the country, though he does believe and to the question whether it would "be useful to establish Unitarian Missionary Schools for the instruction of the children of natives in the rudiments of a European educati n, in the English language. in Christian morality, mingling with it very little instruction relating to the doctrines of Christianity, leaving them chiefly or wholly out of view, to be learned afterwards from our books and our example" he replies that it "would be certainly of great use, and this is the only way of improving their understandings, and ultimately ameliorating their hearts." In the

course of this reply Ram Mohun makes a very important observation concerning the translation of the Bible into Asiatic languages; which is not without value even now. He says :

> "Ideas in general are as differently expressed in the idioms of the East from those of the West, as the East is remote from the West. Greater difficulty therefore must be experienced by a native of Europe in communicating European ideas in the idioms of Asia, than conveying Asiatic ideas into the languages of Europe; so a native of Asia experiences greater inconvenience in expressing Asiatic ideas in European idioms, than in translating European ideas into an Asiatic language."

With regard to what he himself did in that direction, he adds :

> "About four years ago, the Rev. Mr. Adam, and another British missionary, Rev. Mr. Yates, both well reputed for their oriental and classical acquirements, engaged, in common with myself to translate the New Testament into Bengali, and we met twice every week and had for our guidance all the translations of the Bible, by different authors, which we could procure. Notwithstanding our exertions, we were obliged to leave the accurate translation of several phrases to future consideration, and for my own part I felt discontented with the translation adopted of several passages, though I tried frequently, when alone at home, to select more eligible expressions, and applied to native friends for their aid for that purpose. I beg to assure you, that I (though a native of this country) do not recollect having engaged myself once, during my life, in so difficult a task, as the translation of the New Testament into Bengali."

In accordance with the view advanced herein, a Unitarian Mission was started in Calcutta with Mr. Adam as its missionary. The Mission was liberally helped by Ram Mohun Roy and his Indian friends, but it is not known if it received much or any help in money from the Unitarians either in England or America. As for the invitation that Ram Mohun made to them to come to India for the spread of European culture and science, it did not result in

any activity on their part, and none came forward to do such philanthropic or mission-work on behalf of Unitarianism, which has all along singularly lacked in missionary enthusiasm.

But, meanwhile, what the Unitarians were too slow to do or incapable of doing was about to be done on a very large scale by the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the country which perhaps has done more for education than any other. An invitation was being sent to the Presbyterians in Scotland to start mission-work in India in 1823, and it is interesting to find Ram Mohun, in his keen desire for "the diffusion of religious and moral knowledge in India" and for the spread of education which has been a speciality of that body in India, even going so far as to join in this petition to them that was sent from India. Indeed there was a great deal common between the Scotch Reformers and this Hindu Iconoclast and Reformer, and he sympathized with them so much that he even avowed himself a member of their congregation in Calcutta "although not fully concurring in every article of the Westminster Confession of Faith" while adding his own name to the petition. Dr. Bryce, Church of Scotland Chaplain in Calcutta, who was the prime mover in this proposal, says :

> "Encouraged by the approbation of Ram Mohun I presented to the General Assembly of 1824 the petition and memorial which first directed the attention of the Church of Scotland to British India as a field for misssionary exertions on the plan that is now so successfully following out, and to which this eminently gifted scholar, himself a Brahmin of high caste, had specially annexd his sanction."

It was as a result of this proposal that the Presbyterian missions were started with their innumerable schools and colleges which have been so great an agency in the diffusion of scientific and literary, moral and religious knowledge in India, and which have been a source of attraction to some of the greatest educationists India has known, such as Drs. Duff, Wilson, Miller etc. When a few years after this petition was sent Dr. Duff came, he found in Ram Mohun Roy his best friend among the Hindus, and the latter not only helped him with his sympathy and suggestions but gave him "the most valuable and efficient assistance in prosecuting some of the objects of the General Assembly's Mission", to quote Dr.

first in this great act of the educational uplift of the country by Christian Missions.

In the year 1823, Ram Mohun Roy under the pseudonym of Ram Das carried on a minor controversy with a European gentlemen named Dr. Tyler, who, accepting the challenge of Ram Mohun thrown out in his Preface to the final Appeal to the missionaries to carry on the controversy concerning the Divinity of Christ proving it step by step and book by book through the Bible, called upon Ram Mohun Roy to proceed with the matter with him. Ram Mohun refused to do this with one who was only a layman, Dr. Tyler being a surgeon in the employ of the Company, telling him at the same time that he would do it if Dr. Tyler would find some more accredited representative of his religion than himself *i.e.* some missionary or pastor through whom the controversy might be carried on. Dr. Tyler objecting to this mode of procedure wrote to a public paper complaining of Ram Mohun's refusal, whereupon the latter under the name of Ram Das, a supposed Hindu, wrote making common cause with Dr. Tyler against Ram Mohun. This exasperated the doctor more than ever, and there was a consequent exchange of a few letters between him and Ram Das. The stand that Ram Mohun takes in this short epistolary controversy is almost the same that he had taken all along, *viz*. the similarity between Hinduism and Christianity which lies chiefly in their belief in Incarnation, and he implies therein that it is for this that he rejects both of them. In the very last letter he says with much emphasis that "The Incarnation of the Deity is the common basis of Hinduism and Christianity." Being himself against this belief, he puts himself out of the pale of both Hinduism and Christianity, a position in which he has been confirmed since his time by the Brahma Samaj. By classing both Hinduism and Chritianity together, Ram Mohun Roy has clearly shown that they are more akin to each other than to either Unitarianism or Brahmaism. It was only in the last days of Keshub Chunder Sen, the great successor of Ram Mohun that the truth dawned upon him that this similarity between these two faiths, instead of being a stumbling-block which it was so long to the Brahma Samaj, was a stepping stone to a real synthesis or harmony of the two faiths, but the old leaven was too strong even for him, and moreover he passed away before finishing his work, However it is very strange and not without a touch of divinely-appointed irony in it, a sort of Nemesis as if it

were, that such a thing should have been done within the Brahma Samaj itself, and that too under the leadership of Keshub, the greatest leader thereof. The present writer might add in all humility that in his own case the cycle has been completed inasmuch as in his spiritual development along the line of thought laid down by Keshub Chunder Sen, it was through his study of Vaishnavism, the special school of Hinduism which believes in Incarnation, that he came to see the truth of the perfect Incarnation of God in Christ Jesus. While the similarity of the two faiths interested and attracted him to both of them, it was the dissimilarity between the two examples held out in both these as the supreme Incarnation that led him to prefer Christianity to Vaishnavism. This was undoubtedly due to the same ethical feeling which made Ram Mohun Roy even in this controversy take Ram as the typical Avatar and not Krishna, though Hinduism as a whole has looked upon the latter as the typical and perfect Avatar.

PUBLIC ACTIVITIES

While carrying on all these controversies whether with orthodox Hindus or Christians, Ram Mohun Roy was busy with several other measures of public utility in various fields—social, political, educational etc. In order that these activities might be carried on properly he started a Bengali paper, one of the first of its kind in India, at the end of the year 1821, or perhaps earlier. It discussed various matters relating to India as well as foreign countries with sobriety and independence that were so characteristic of him in everything that he did. The Indian readers of to-day may be interested to learn that exactly a century ago Ram Mohun Roy espoused not only the cause of the Indian people but that of Ireland also, and that he went to the length of sympathizing with Turkey in its struggle against Greek aspirations after independence, a matter in which his Asiatic sympathies may have led him to judge or perhaps misjudge the question in Turkey's favour. He started another paper in Persian at about the same time. In a year or two after these papers were started, the English editor of an English paper of Calcutta was summarily asked to leave India on account of some criticism of the Government made by him and an attempt was made by the Government to curtail the liberty of the Press. At this time Ram Mohun Roy and his friends presented a memorial

to the Government written by Ram Mohun Roy, a memorial which has been called by Miss Collet "the Areopagitica of Indian history. Alike in diction and argument it forms a noble landmark in the progress of English culture in the East." When this memorial was not paid heed to by the Government, Ram Mohun and his friends took the next step *viz.* that of appealing to the King in Council. This Appeal is described by the same writer as "one of the noblest pieces of English to which Ram Mohun put his hand." She goes on to say as follows in regard to it :

> "Its stately periods and not less stately thought recall the eloquence of the great orators of a century ago. In a language and style for ever associated with the glorious vindication of liberty, it invokes against the arbitrary exercise of British power the principles and traditions which are distinctive of British history."

This petition also was disregarded and the Press Ordinance came into force. There were only four papers at this time in the vernacular and of these two were conducted by Ram Mohun. Looking to this earliest stage of the political life of Modern India, it reflects no ordinary credit on Ram Mohun that he should have fought for the freedom of the Press in this noble, dignified and at the same time thorough-going manner, and that he should have conceived the mission of the Press to be so lofty. But in this as in everything else he was the pioneer and leader of Modern India, and the ideals that he laid down for the guidance of life in various departments were so very high and comprehensive that they have not yet been antiquated; rather it is now that they are being fulfilled.

Another activity with which he specially concerned himself was that of the spread of Education in India. For this purpose he started several schools and colleges, and co-operated with every one who was interested in education. He had started some years since the Hindu College in co-operation with David Hare and in the year 1822 started an Anglo-Indian school, for the maintenance of which he paid chiefly from his own pocket. Some two or three years after this we find him starting the Vedant College, a college in which Sanskrit was taught along with other subjects such as science etc. But what is more important than all these was the

leading part that he took in the great controversy then raging between the 'Orientalists' and the 'Anglicists' with regard to the kind of Education that was to be imparted by the Government to the youth of the country. Opinion was sharply divided between these two parties and both of them had among them eminent Englishmen While the Government was about to yield to the importunities of the Orientalists among whom there were Sanskrit scholars of note, Ram Mohun threw all the weight of his personality and manifold experience on the other side and won for it the victory which it got, a victory to which we owe the Education that India has been receiving for the last century. Of all men in India at that time Ram Mohun Roy knew best both the advantages and disadvantages of the old oriental system, and besides he himself had derived through his studies of Sanskrit and Arabic literature great benefit and was the noblest product thereof. In spite of this he was for the Western system which he upheld with all the vigour of which he was capable, maintaining that the new system that was then coming into vogue in Europe itself was with its practical knowledge far preferable to the Medieval system whether of the West or of the East. At bottom it was not so much a question between the Western and the Eastern system as between the Medieval and the Modern. As for the medium through which this education was to be imparted Ram Mohun was in favour of the English language as compared with Sanskrit, inasmuch as such subjects as mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy with other useful sciences which he wanted to be taught to Indian young men in preference to Sanskrit grammar, philology and philosophy, which were the chief subjects of the old Indian system, could be better learnt in that language than in Sanskrit or any other vernacular of the land. With this in view he wrote a "Letter on English Education" to Lord Amherst pressing all the claims of that education on his mind. Thus this strong advocacy of his had not a little to do with the ultimate choice that the Government made and to which we owe our present system of Education, a system which, in spite of all its defects, and they are many, has done more than any other single agency to unite India and to make it what we find it to-day. For this India is indebted not a little to this great man along with Lord William Bentinck, Macaulay, David Hare etc. However it is worth recording in this connection that Ram Mohun Roy was not from the first an advocate of the

Western system of education. As early as 1815, he had begun to think of the question and was at first in favour of the system in vogue, but David Hare who was at first only a watch-maker in Calcutta but soon came to the front as an educationist of not was for the more practical system of the West and he soon converted Ram Mohun and many others among Indians as well as Europeans to his views. But since Ram Mohun came to see the advisibility of introducing the western system, his enthusiasm for it was so great that he himself, in spite of his many preoccupations, wrote books in the vernacular on Geography and Grammar. Thus like Milton, he was not above doing what would be considered by ordinary people little tasks.

During these years he carried on a most uncompromising campaign against the cruel custom of Suttee, and ultimately succeeded in securing its abolition at the hands of the Government. It is one of the greatest measures of Social or Humanitarian Reform and Ram Mohun's name will ever be associated with that of Lord William Bentinck for having removed this great blot on Hindu Civilization. While the Government was hesitating between two opinions *viz.*, whether this cruel and inhuman custom should be put down at once or by slow stages, Ram Mohun was carrying on an agitation in favour of its abolition at once through his paper as well as by writing pamphlets etc. He went to the root of the matter and showed in a tract called "Modern encroachments on the ancient rights of females according to the Hindu Law of inheritance," that it was because no provision was made by the modern Hindus for women as such in the inheritance of property that such a cruel custom as the Suttee and other evils such as walking "in the paths of unrighteousness" arose. He says that that was not the practice of the ancient Hindus and he pleads for a proper share in inheritance to be given to woman in accordance with the ancient law and says among other things the following :

> "It is not from religious prejudices and early impressions only, that Hindu widows burn themselves on the piles of their deceased husbands, but also from their witnessing the distress in which widows of the same rank in life are involved and the insults and slights to which they are daily subjected, that they become in a great measure regardless of their existence after

the death of their husbands : and this indifference accompanied with the hope of future reward held out to them leads them to the horrible act of suiside. These restraints on female inheritance encourage, in a great degree, polygamy, a frequent source of the greatest misery in native families : a grand object of Hindus being to secure a provision for their male offspring, the law, which relieves them from the necessity of giving an equal portion to their wives, removes a principal restraint on the indulgence of their inclinations in respect to the number they marry. Some of them, especially Brahmans of higher birth, marry ten, twenty or thirty women, either for some small consideration, or merely to gratify their brutal inclinations, leaving a great many of them, both during their life-time and after their death, to the mercy of their own paternal relation. The evil consequences arising from such polygamy the public may easily guess, from the nature of the fact itself, without my being reduced to the mortification of particularising those which are known by the native public to be of daily occurrence. To these women there are left only three modes of conduct to pursue after the death of their husbands. I. To live a miserable life as entire slaves to others, without indulging any hope of support from another husband. II. To walk in the paths of unrighteousness for their maintenance and independence. III. To die on the funeral pile of their husbands, loaded with the applause and honour of their neighbours. It cannot pass unnoticed by those who are acquainted with the state of society in India, that the number of female suicides in the single province of Bengal, when compared with those of any other British provinces, is almost ten to one: we may safely attribute this disproportion chiefly to the greater frequency of a plurality of wives among tho natives of Bengal, and to their total neglect in providing for the maintenance of their females."

As to how this work of actually burning the widows was carried on, we read about it in an address presented by Ram Mohun Roy and his coadjutors to Lord William Bentinck in 1830 as a counter-demonstration to an appeal made to him by orthodox Hindus against the abolition of Suttee, as follows :

"It is, however, very fortunate that the British Government

under whose protection the lives of both the males and females of India have been happily placed by Providence, has after diligent inquiry, ascertained that even those inferior authorities, permitting wilful ascent by a widow to the funeral pile, have been practically set aside, and that, in gross violation of their language and spirit, the relatives of widows have, in the burning of those infatuated females, almost invariably used to fasten them down on the pile, and heap over them large quantities of wood and other materials adequate to the prevention of their escape an outrage on humanity which has been frequently perpetrated under the indirect sanction of native officers, undeservedly employed for the security of life and preservation of peace and tranquility."

Ram Mohun Roy, while carrying on this agitation, had to fight not only against the bigotry of the Hindus but also the inertia of the Government, which was slow to move at first from fear least its interference with the socio-religious customs of the country might be looked upon as an unjustifiable intrusion on its part. At first it thought that the agitation of reformers like Ram Mohun and his comrades would be sufficient to remove the evil custom, but the number of the Suttees instead of decreasing under this propaganda actually increased in the year 1825, nearly 650 widows being burnt alive in Bengal alone, Calcutta and the district round about supplying more than half of that number. The eyes of the Government were opened once more at this, but still it was not for total suppression at once, though the judges of most of the Courts pleaded for it. In the meantime Bentinck came as the Viceroy and he set about it in a resolute manner. He made sure from inquiries that the Indian Army would not be affected if the custom were abolished and the judges of the High Court were already with him. He invited Ram Mohun Roy to a private interview with him, and though the latter at first refused to go when he was called by the Viceroy as such, excusing himself on the ground that he was a *Vanprastha* and so was devoted to religious study, he went when he was requested once more in the name of Mr. William Bentinck. When these two men, both so noble, met, Lord Bentinck consulted him as to the advisability of its total abolition, and he must have been surprised to find that Ram Mohun Roy was against such abolition by coercion. Ram Mohun gave his opinion that such

action on the part of the Government will be misconstrued and that "the practice might be suppressed quietly and unobservedly by increasing the difficulties and by the indirect agency of the police." However, he was asked to submit his views on it in a written form; which he did proving from the sacred Scriptures of the Hindus that the custom was not one enjoined by the Hindu religion. Taking this pronouncement of such a great religious teacher as Ram Mohun Roy for its guide, the Government headed by Bentinck, who was undeterred by the counsel of Ram Mohun not to put down the custom by force, passed in 1829 the Regulation forbidding its practice altogether declaring it illegal and criminal. It was thus that this custom, one of the must cruel that was ever practised by such a humane people as the Hindus, came to an end. Undoubtedly there were protests and petitions from orthodox Hindus and the matter even went to the King in Council in England, but happily nothing came of it and this blot on Hindu humanity, and civilization was erased for ever.

An indirect result of this agitation for abolition and counter-agitation was the starting of a Society called the Dharma Sabha in antagonism to the Brahma Sabha of Ram Mohun Roy at about the time when it was started, *i.e.*, 1828. This Dharma Sabha was meant to defend the Hindu religion as well as the "excellent customs and usages" of the Hindu people from such innovation and reforms as were being introduced by such men as Ram Mohun Roy and his friends. Though the Society was started with a great deal of enthusiasm, it does not seem to have prospered, for hardly anything of it has been heard since, but it has this merit, *viz.*, it is the first of all those movements that have sprung up since, for the defence of orthodoxy in opposition to the reformers.

Besides these social, educational and journalistic activities, Ram Mohun was busy with the cause of the political progress of the country as well. For years he had been studying the political conditions and the methods of constitutional government in European countries, and had thrown himself whole-heartedly into the cause of democratic reform not only in India but all over the world. Wherever the cause of representative government would triumph it was a personal triumph for him and he rejoiced thereby as much as the people who gained directly by it. Future generations of Indians will always rejoice in the thought that this great man was a great lover of freedom, whether political, social or religious.

Mr. Adam, the Unitarian missionary, who knew him very intimately, says with regard to him that "Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul, freedom not of action merely, but of thought." This passion of his for freedom was so great that when the Neopolitans were robbed of their constitution by their king, Ram Mohun wrote to a friend these woras :—"From the late unhappy news I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European colonies, possessed of a greater degree of the same blessing than what they now enjoy. Under these circumstances I consider the cause of the Neopolitans as my own, and their enemies as ours. Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been, and never will be, ultimately successful." When the people of Spain got a constitution Ram Mohun was so pleased with the news that he gave a public dinner at the Town Hall of Calcutta, an action the like of which has not been repeated again during the last hundred years in India in spite of all the political progress that has been made in the country. When in the year 1830 there was a Revolution in France, Ram Mohun was very enthusiastic about it and looked upon it is a triumph of liberty. On his way to England he met with a serious accident at the Cape of Good Hope, and yet when he learnt that there were two French frigates flying the flag of the Revolution in the neighbourhood, he went to visit them in spite of doctor's advice. While in England, he sided enthusiastically with the Liberals in their efforts to pass the great Reform Bill of the year 1830, and he even went to the length of telling the people there that in case the Bill failed to pass, he would give up all connection with the British Government.

His political activities in India were manifold. He was trying long since to develop the political consciousness of his people by his papers, and whenever any particular problem affecting the interests of the people arose Ram Mohun was the first to draw the attention of both the people and the Government to it, appealing to the latter by various means to redress the grievance in accordance with the lofty principles of liberty which were cherished so deeply by the British people. How he worked to secure the freedom of the Press has been already noticed. Again when a new Jury Act was passed by the Government in 1827, an Act wherein were introduced "religious distinctions into the judicial system of the

country," so that "any natives, Hindu or Mohammedan, are rendered by this Bill subject to judicial trial by Christians, either European or Native, while Christians, including Native converts, are exempted from the degradation of being tried either by a Hindu or Musalman Juror, however, high he may stand in the estimation of society" and which Act also denied "to Hindus and Mohammedans the honour of a seat in the Grand Jury even in the trial of fellow Hindus or Musalmans", he was the first to protest against it, and sent petitions for presentation to both the Houses of Parliament signed by many leading Hindus and Mohammedans. In connection with this question, among other things he wrote a passage which is quite prophetic of the condition of India as it is today. It stands thus :

"Supposing that some 100 years hence the Native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirements of general and political knowledge as well as of modern arts and sciences, is it possible that they will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectually unjust and oppressive measures serving to degrade them in the scale of society ? It should not be lost sight of that the position of India is very different from that of Ireland, to any quarter of which an English fleet may suddenly convey a body of troops that may force its way in the requisite direction and succeed in suppressing every effort of a refractory spirit. Were India to share one-fourth of the knowledge and energy of that country, she would prove from her remote situation, her riches and her vast population, either useful and profitable as a willing province, an ally of the British Empire, or troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy."

"In common with those who seem partial to the British rule from the expectation of future benefits arising out of the connection, I necessarily feel extremely grieved in often witnessing Acts and Regulations passed by Government without consulting or seeming to understand the feelings of its Indian subjects and without considering that this people have had for more than half a century the advantage of being ruled by and associated with an enlightened nation, advocates of liberty and promoters of knowledge."

How wise are these words and what lessons do they not convey to the rulers of the country even today at the distance of a hundred years? His English biographer truly says: "There is here in germ the national aspiration which is now breaking forth into cries for 'representation of India in the Imperial Parliament,' 'Home Rule for India,' and even 'India for the Indians' The prospect of an educated India, of an India approximating to European standards of culture, seems to have never been long absent from Ram Mohan's mind; and he did, however, vaguely, claim in advance for his countrymen the political rights which progress in civilization inevitably involves. Here again Ram Mohan stands forth as the tribune and prophet of the new India." However, the nationalism for which he stood a century back, though anticipating all that is happening today in India, was of no narrow type, and he fully believed in the good and great effects of the mutual good understanding between Englishmen and Indians. He says with regard to it:

> "From personal experience, I am impressed with the conviction that the greater our intercourse with European gentlemen, th. greater will be our improvement in literary, social and political affairs."

Ram Mohan Roy was even in favour of the settlement of Europeans in India who, he thought, would infuse new energy into the country and would protect the peasants from being "victims to the whims of zemindars and great banias," by employing them in their plantations, etc. He was always anxious to improve the condition of the agricultural people of India, and would have even welcomed a sprinkling of model landlords of upper classes only from England. He appealed in various ways to the Government to make the position of the rack-rented ryot better and to alleviate "the present miseries of the agricultural peasantry of India," whose rents were already "raised to a ruinous extent," by the zemindars, who had already been benefited a great deal by the Permanent Settlement of 1793. He urged upon the Government to give the cultivators a permanent interest in the soil, so that not only their condition might be improved but that they might be a power in the land on which the Government could safely rely in times of danger, averting thus "the necessity

of keeping on foot an immense standing army at an enormous cost." He wrote several pamphlets concerning questions such as European Settlement in India, the Judicial and Revenue Systems in India, etc. In all these he stood for lofty and noble ideals of liberty, national well-being and international unity. Thus, in all his political, educational and social activities he looked forward to India being a great country in which both Indians and Englishmen might live in peace and concord and bring it to the level of European countries, making it a kind of United States of Asia which, being westernized to a certain extent in all things, might enlighten in course of time the whole of the vast continent of Asia.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BRAHMA SABHA

Meanwhile, amid all these manifold activities of his the work that was dearest to his heart *viz.*, the religious reformation of his country, was being carried on with as much energy as ever. He was occupying a unique position before his countrymen, a position which it has fallen to the lot of few to occupy since. In one sense he was neither a Hindu nor a Christian, and yet in another sense he was both. His religious position at this time has been excellently summarized by Mr. Adam in a letter to one Mr. Tuckerman that he wrote in 1826 as follows :

> "Mr. Tuppin in one of his letters asks, Does Ram Mohan profess to be a Christian ? . . . I find it difficult to give a definite answer to this question, but the nearest approach to the truth, although I hope and believe that it is not the truth itself, would perhaps be to say that he is both a Christian and a Hindu, Christian with Christians and a Hindu with Hindus. And before you say either that I am contradicting myself, or that he is insincere in his religion you must candidly weigh all the circumstances in which he is placed. In the first place then, his relinquishment of idolatry is absolute, total, public, uncompromising : and when you reflect who he is and what he is, this is of itself an invincible test of integrity of religious principle and conduct. But his relinquishment of idolatry is not inconsistent with the retention of his Brahmanical rights, and observances of the rules of caste, the latter of which is necessary to the former and both are necessary to enable him

to be useful to his countrymen,—the thing which he has most at heart. On the other hand, although he may safely relinquish idolatry, he cannot safely profess Christianity. The profession would involve loss of caste, loss of property, loss of influence, loss of everything but a name : and while he employs caste, property, influence and everything to promote, not the nominal profession merely, but the enlightened belief and salutary influences of Christianity, his claim to be a practical although not a nominal Christian would seem to be undoubted. In this point of view, Hinduism furnishes the antidote to its own inherent intolerance. There is another reason for the course he has pursued. The profession of Christianity would identify him in the opinion of Hindus not with the respectable and liberal portion of the Christian population, but with the low, ignorant and depraved converts recently made by the English or long since made by the Portuguese missionaries,—and in the opinion of Musalmans who hold him in high esteem, with Trinitarians generally, for such Musalmans suppose all Christians to be. In other words, the profession of Christianty would inevitably, in the present circumstances of this country, identify him with persons from whom he differs as widely as from those with whom he is now identified. He has, therefore, only a choice of evils, and he has hitherto chosen that which, although he groans under its bondage, leaves him greater liberty and usefulness than he could otherwise possess. I have given you the view of his circumstances and conduct which I have reason to suppose he would himself give you if he were now writing to you : and I have only further to add that . . . I do not feel these reasons to be quite so convincing as they appear to him . . . . I have no doubt that in his opinion they posses all the force necessary fully to justify him in the sight of God and his own conscience in the course which he has pursued. Since writing the preceding paragraph, I have had an opportunity of showing it to Ram Mohan Roy, who considers it a correct representation of his feelings and sentiments."

This was the religious position of Ram Mohan Roy as it affected his person, and it has been described very correctly. Added to this there was what may be called the national aspect of it, which

has been treated elsewhere in this book in connection with the proselytizing propaganda of the Christian missionaries. Thus, both from the personal as well as the national standpoint, Ram Mohan had before him "only a choice of evils," and though he groaned "under its bondage," he chose that which he considered "in the sight of God and his own conscience" to be the lesser evil. He had to steer his ship between the Scylla of Hindu idolatry and polytheism with all their concomitant evils, and the Charybdis of European proselytism with purse, prestige and power behind it. It was indeed one of the most delicate situations in which a religious man and much more a teacher, who has to think of not only himself but of others whose numbers perhaps may be millions, could be put, and the way in which he handled it shows a most remarkable insight into spiritual truth as well as human nature. Only a man endowed with the rarest gifts with which a religious teacher can be blessed could work in the way he did, and from the way in which the work that he left has prospered, it is but right to say that the hand of Providence was behind it. For it was in the very movement which he left as the ripest fruit of his life and work, *viz.*, the Brahma Samaj, that there arose a man of Keshub Chunder Sen's type, who, by the sheer force of his spiritual genius not only steered the ship between those two rocks much further than before, but taking them by the horns as if it were, almost carried it safely to the other side.

But not to anticipate, so far as these years 1825-26 are concerned, we find Ram Mohan Roy closely identified with the Unitarian Mission. However it must be said that he did not agree with the Unitarians in all things a fact which must not be lost sight of in any fair estimate that may be made of his motives and work. Although he agreed with them in most of the fundamentals of their faith, he differed from them inasmuch as he had decidedly a more catholic attitude towards the various religions of the world. His love for the Hindu Religion, particularly what he called the Vedant, and what he did for its spread, has been already noticed. Besides, he at about this time planned to write a life of Mohammed, the founder of the Moslem faith for which he had always a partiality, but unfortunately he could not do it owing to his many preoccupations. In these and various other ways this catholic side of his character manifested itself, and it is quite likely that it did not appeal to his Unitarian friends.

Another thing in which he perhaps differed from them was in regard to the question of caste. While the Unitarians may have looked upon it more in the light of a religious question, Ram Mohan did regard it as a civil one. In a private letter that he wrote in the year 1828, he says :

> "I agree with you that in point of vices the Hindus are not worse than the generality of Christians in Europe or America, but I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and sub-divisions among them has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise. . . . It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort. I fully agree with you that there is nothing so sublime as the precepts taught by Christ, and there is nothing equal to the simple doctrines he inculcated."

As for the Unitarian Mission that had been started some years since Ram Mohan Roy was doing his best to co-operate with Mr. Adam in order to make it a success. They were raising funds for it both in India and elsewhere, and the Unitarian friends in England had sent to them Rs. 15,000. They started their divine service again in the year 1827 after giving it up for some time, and they wanted even to erect a chapel for such Unitarian worship. Ram Mohan Roy even wrote a small tract, though not in his own name, wherein he gave the reasons why he *i.e.*, a Hindoo, attended the Unitarian worship. He said that the chief of these reasons was that in such worship there was pure rational adoration of God the Maker and the Ruler of the Universe, and that in it there was no such element as belief in Incarnation or Trinity, which things were dinned into his ears by the Hindus as well as the orthodox Christians. Mr. Adam tried various means to attract people of all classes, literate as well as illiterate, but to no purpose. Somehow or other the work of this Mission could not make any progress. Even the services were very poorly attended and many times the members of the Managing Committee itself failed to put in their

appearance. Ultimately Mr. Adam had to give up all attempts at mission-work, the divine service was stopped and he "retired heart-broken."

But before Mr. Adam retired, he had endeavoured to form the Indian members of the Unitarian Association whom he calls Hindu Unitarians into some sort of a permanent Association "for the establishment of the public worship of the One God among themselves, for the printing of tracts and for the diffusion of religious knowledge generally among the country-men," as he wrote to Mr. John Bowring, London, in 1828. He says further in the same letter that "to prevent prejudice from being excited, it will be necessary to keep Christianity out of view at present in connection with this auxiliary, but it will really be (what it perhaps may not be nominally) an auxiliary to our views, and a highly valuable one, too, if I can succeed in creating the necessary degree of interert to begin and carry it on." In 1829, he announces to Dr. Tuckerman that "there has accordingly been formed a Hindu Unitarian Association, the object of which is, however, strictly Hindu and not Christian, *i.e.*, to teach and practise the worship of the one only God on the basis of the divine authority of the Ved, and not of the Christian scriptures. This is a basis of which I have distinctly informed Ram Mohan and my other native friends that I cannot approve." The Hindu Unitarian Association spoken of here is the Brahma Sabha which was started in the year 1828. One can find from these letters quoted here that Mr. Adam had a hand in founding the Brahma Samaj, at least in giving birth to the idea thereof, though he did not like its basis to be Ved as he himself says.

This is one account of the birth of the Brahma Samaj, well-authenticated by letters of Mr. Adam himself. Another account, which is by no means contradictory to this, says that the idea originated from among the disciples of Ram Mohan. One of these, while returning from the place of worship where Mr. Adam officiated as the minister said to Ram Mohan, "What need is there for us to go to the prayer-house of strangers to perform our worship ? We ought to erect a house of our own in which to worship One God." This idea was gradually taken up and the result was the establishment of the Brahma Samaj.

Whoever may have been the first to suggest such an idea, or whether such an idea may have come to both Mr. Adam and to

the disciple of Ram Mohan independently of each other, there is not the least doubt that Ram Mohan Roy had created round about him an atmosphere of thought in which Unitarianism, whether Christian or Hindu or both simultaneously, had been the watchword of his party for over a decade past, and all such ideas were bound to rise therein. Years since he had, by his translations and publications of the Upnishads and by his various tracts, tried to spread Hindu Theism or Hindu Unitarianism among his countrymen, and he had already gathered round him a band of disciples. All these years he had carried on several controversies with Hindus of various schools of thought in his own language and thus also had spread his monotheistic views far and wide. He had started various Societies also, such as the Atmiya Sabha in which he and his friends discussed questions concerning the ultimate destiny of the soul, the existence of God, etc., from the Hindu and more particularly the Vedantic point of view. His own researches in the Vedant for nearly a generation past had made him find therein a body of truth which he regarded as sufficient for the guidance of his countrymen and he had tried his best to put it within their reach in as easy a manner as possible. This leaven was already working in the minds of people. Later on when he found what he considered to be a more perfect form of Religion in the Teaching of Jesus Christ, he put that too before his people in his Precepts of Jesus and in various other ways. But in these excellent and praiseworthy efforts of his he was thearted the most by those who should have given him the greatest help *viz.*, the Christian missionaries themselves. The prejudice created against him in the minds of orthodox Christians was not little, for even so sane and saintly a man as Bishop Heber wrote in 1823 to a friend of his in England: "Our chief hindrances are some Deistical Brahmins who have left their old religion and desire to found a sect of their own, and some of those who are professionally engaged in the same work with ourselves the Dissenters." The Anglican Bishop thus classed Ram Mohan with the Dissenters who were heretics in his eyes, and the Dissenters among whom the Baptist missionaries were the chief looked upon Ram Mohan as a "heathen" and as an "injurer of the truth".

However, he, headless of these prejudices and opposition, carried on his work in favour of Unitarian Chrtstianity, and he spent not only a good deal of money for it, but was even prepared

to leave all his property to the Unitarian Mission in case he had no male heir a fact which we learn from a letter of Mr. Adam. But in these efforts of his, he met with deep disappointment, and that was largely due to the attitude taken up by the missionaries and orthodox Christians. In Unitarian Christianity such as he found it in the Precepts of Jesus, both moral and religious, he found that universal religion which the whole world was in need of, and which alone would unite the various castes and communities of this country as well as the peoples and nations of the whole world. He had again and again given expression to this faith of his, but was met with only strong opposition and argument and even abuse from those who should have been the first to understand and welcome him as the most powerful ally that Providence had raised for them. In addition to this he found in the proselytism carried on by the missionaries not only a menace to the civilization and religions of India but a complete perversion of the Religion of Jesus as he conceived it. Hence, it would not be unnatural if he came to consider any countenancing of Christianity even of the Unitarian stamp, a sort of direct or indirect help given to the proselytizing propaganda. But we are not sure if he ever came to look upon it that way. Rather he still persisted in preaching Unitarianism but it was all to no effect. In course of time even Mr. Adam began to think that "it will be necessary to keep Christianity out of view at present."

Meanwhile the Hindu Unitarianism had not altogether receded into the background. While conducting his controversy with the missionaries through the Brahmanical Magazine, he had brought it forward against them as the purer side of the Hindu religion. He had started what was called the Vedant College where along with other subjects of practical importance, Samscrit philosophy and more particularly the Vedant philosophy was taught as an offset to the more exclusively practical character of the education for which he had stood before the Government. Besides, he wrote two tracts called 'Different modes of Worship' and 'The Gayatri, the most sacred text of the Vedas' in the years 1825 and 1826 respectively. In the first he tried to show that there have been recognized by Hindu sages such as Vyas, etc.. whose authority has been unimpeachable, two classes of worshippers, one through forms and the other through spirit, just as in the Bible the Jews are represented in the Old Testament as worshipping in a particular place which

has been held sacred, while in the Christian dispensation Christ's followers are asked to worship God not in this place or that, but in spirit and in truth. In the second he explains at length the meaning of the Gayatri which, he says on the title page, is "esteemed by those who believe in the revelation of the Veds as most appropriate to the nature of Supreme Being." In this way, whenever an occasion arose, Ram Mohan Roy was ready to defend what he called "Hindu Theism" or Hindu Unitarianism, and put its claims before the notice of his countrymen as well as foreigners. But much of this work excepting the last tract he had done during the latter period under the name of some body else. All this work required to be done, but he perhaps felt it inconsistent with his open profession of Unitarianism. Whatever the reasons for this particular course of conduct be, and they are known to Heaven alone, there is no doubt that Ram Mohan Roy had not given up Hindu Theism altogether nor was there any need for him to do this, though between that and Unitarian Christianity he decidedly preferred the latter as the purer and fuller form of Religion. But unfortunately his choice was not confined to these two only. There were other circumstances which most materially affected the whole question and which could not be left out of consideration. Even Mr. Adam himself felt the force of all of them. On the top of these came the utter failure of the Unitarian Mission. Unitarianism came as a foreign religion, and moreover it was easily confounded by the Hindus with Christianity, the religion of the conquerors, and hence they would have nothing to do with it. Mr. Adam was the first to suggest a falling back upon what was more general or ethnic. Also similar suggestions came from Ram Mohan's own disciples. He himself may be looking forward to some such thing. Thus, the idea of a Hindu Unitarian Association gradually arose not in this mind or that but in all of them, through sheer psychological and national necessity as it were, and in consequence there was established the Brahma Samaj, the first religious movement of Modern India, on the 20th of August 1828.

It was called at first the Brahma Sabha, meaning an Association of the Worshippers of Brahma. Its membership was open to every one of whatever caste, colour or creed, though the ministry was confined to the Brahmins only. The object of the Sabha was only spiritual worship of One God, to offer which it met once every week, the day chosen for such worship at first being

Saturday. The way in which this worship was offered has been thus described by Mr. Adam :

> "The service begins with two or three of the Pandits singing, or rather *chanting* in the cathedral style, some of the spiritual portions of the Ved, which are next explained in the vernacular dialect to the people by another Pandit. This is followed by a discourse in Bengali . . . and the whole is concluded by, hymns both in Samscrit and Bengali, sung with the voice and accompanied by instrumental music, which is also occassionally interposed between other parts of the service. The audience consists generally of from 50 to 60 individuals, several Pandits, a good many Brahmins, and all decent and attentive in their demeanor."

The service that is thus described may have been an adaptation to a certain extent of the Unitarian service with some changes here and there and the Veds taking the place of the Bible. Possibly it is the same order that is followed at present now in the Adi Brahma Samaj, the only branch of the Brahma Samaj which has kept up some of the traditions of this Brahma Sabha, a fact which its very name, given to it by Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore when Keshub with the band of progressive Brahmas separated from him in the year 1866, signifies. The other branches of the Brahma Samaj, such as the Bharatvarshiya Brahma Samaj and the Sadharan Brahma Samaj have altered the form a little, introducing more of the vernacular and extempore element instead of the Samscrit *mantras* and readings.

As for the basis of the Brahma Sabha which was now established, it was the Veds, the same that has been recognized by every sect of the Hindus. In Ram Mohan's own time the question was asked, and it has been asked more than once since, whether it was right for Ram Mohan Roy to do this, particularly as he did not believe in the infallibility of the Veds and had acknowledged the superiority of the Christian Scriptures to them in his other writings. Perhaps the only answer to this question may be found in this, that Ram Mohan Roy had to make in this matter to a choice between two evils and he chose the lesser one. As has been already said, the Christian Scriptures were out of question. Failing them, his choice was limited to the two alternatives of making his

movement either a purely deistic one based natural reason, or a theistic one by the very fact of its being based on some Scripture or Revelation. If it had been of the first kind, it would have degenerated soon into a sort of philosophical club and would never have become the great religious movement that it came to be. Moreover, Ram Mohan Roy, although he never believed the verbal infallibility of any Scripture, whether it be the Ved or the Bible, had now come to know the value of Scripture too well to discard it altogether and to install mere reason in its place. It is true Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore some years after declared the Veds to be fallible and removed them from the basic position that had been given to them by Ram Mohan Roy, but perhaps he took a too narrow view of the meaning of Revelation of Scripture, and when in order to supply their place he made a selection of a number of verses from the Upnishads giving them the name "Brahma Dharma" he gave the movement a turn which would have very likely cut short its life, had it not been for the great genius of Keshub Chunder Sen who, from the very beginning of his independent career, made the movement an eclectic one by selecting verses from the various Scriptures of the world and putting that selection under the name of Sloka-Sangraha before the Bharatvarshiya Brahma Samaj as its religious guide. Even this was fragmentary, and in the last phase of his life, *viz.*, the new Dispensation period, Keshub came to recognize a sort of unity in all the Scriptures of the world, a view which was a logical development of Ram Mohan Roy's position with regard to the religions of the world, not as it appears in the establishment of this Brahma Sabha which was a particular adaptation for particular ends, but as it does in the general tenor of his life and teachings. Thus, Ram Mohan Roy had to choose between Deism and what he called Hindu Theism, and it was indeed very wise of him to have chosen the latter.

However, if Ram Mohan Roy was justified in his choice of the Veds as the basis of the Brahma Sabha, perhaps he was not to the same extent in his confining the ministry of the Sabha to the Brahmins only. In this also the progressive nature of the Brahma Samaj has asserted itself, particularly under the leadership of Keshub Chunder Sen, and the ministry has been thrown open to all. It is not that Ram Mohan Roy did not respect genuine worth wherever it was found. He was too modern for such conservatism and pride of caste, and moreover he had known by his study

observation and comparison with other peoples such as Mohammedans and Europeans the evil results of the caste-system to which he largely attributed the political dependence of the country for centuries past. His own mode of life was a happy blend of Hindu and Moslem style with a touch of Europeanism, and in eating and drinking he was not particular with regard to the keeping of the restrictions of the caste-system. But although he may have groaned and did groan under its weight, he was very particularly careful to maintain his position in the caste-system. On that depended his religious work, his other activities and the "security of his property" too, as he wrote to his friends in England giving them his instructions concerning his funeral. Moreover, it may be said in his defence that if there is any thing such as fulness of time in such matters, that was certainly wanting in those days and that it required a generation or almost half a century and a Keshub to give that blow to the caste-system which it received in the Brahma Samaj. It is then no wonder if Ram Mohan hesitated to meddle with the *Varnashram* system in any direct way, and if he confined the ministry of his Sabha to the Brahmins only, though it was decidedly much more of a compromise than his having the Veds as the basis of the Brahma Samaj. Possibly he may have thought it too much of an innavation to allow any but a Brahmin to read and expound the Veds which were regarded as the sole monopoly of that priestly caste, though he allowed even those who were considered Sudras and Malechhas to attend such recital of the Sacred Ved, an act which was forbidden them all these centuries. He was pouring new wine into old bottles for the moment, and perhaps in his heart of hearts may have looked for a day when all such unnatural restrictions would vanish as they had done in the West through the Reformation brought about by Luther, and the innate worth of Man as Man would be recognized by all.

It would be of great interest to know whether Ram Mohan Roy by his founding the Brahma Sabha meant to give a new religion to India under the name of "Brahma Dharma" as it came to be evolved by his successor Devendra Nath Tagore, or under that of the "New Dispensation" which was a later evolution under the lead of Keshub Chunder Sen : also whether Ram Mohan ever meant the Brahma Sabha to be a socio-religious community that it came to be in course of time. According to the present writer and to many others, Ram Mohan Roy may not have fore-seen these

developments of his own work, though one may well think that he would have welcomed them, in spite of the fact that they were in a sense departures from the lines laid down by him. Though his own work, so far as the establishment of this Sabha is concerned, was more of a Revivalist and Reformer than of a new Teacher, he was, by his life-long search of and fidelity to truth and by his laying the foundation of spiritual worship of One God, sowing a seed of mighty potentialities which could not but grow and fructify in the way it did. It was this priceless treasure of the spiritual worship which he was leaving to his countrymen as a legacy, and thereby he was opening the doors of spiritual liberty wider than they had been opened before. This new spiritual freedom was the privilege of pure and spiritual Vedic worship granted to men of every caste and creed and colour, a priviledge that was hitherto kept back from them, although a number of back-doors had been opened in what may be called the Pauranic period when the Puranas were made to supply the place of the Veds so far as the generality of people were concerned. He was adding a new class of people, *viz.*, *Grihastas* to "the ten classes of Sannyasis" who, he had said in a tract of his, were the only persons besides the followers of Nanak, Kabir and Dadu, who believed in the Unity of Godhead and worshipped Him spiritually. This was indeed a great step for him to take, and in it lay involved a number of the other steps that were taken by his successors.

The Sabha soon made some progress, the people becoming more interested in it as they took it to be an indigenous affair, a Swadeshi Society. The attendance at the divine services became larger and even funds were forthcoming for the spread of its work. All this made Ram Mohan Roy and his companions think of securing a permanent place of their own where they might worship, a sort of Brahma-Mandir, though perhaps it was not called by that dignified name then, the idea of Mandir or Temple being too much associated with idolatry to allow them to make use of it without being misunderstood. A site on Chitpore Road was secured and a modest building called a "brick-built messuage" was erected thereupon. This property, along with a substantial sum of money, was put into the hands of a body of Trustees. The Trust Deed that was then made is indeed a document of rare worth, showing what a lofty ideal Ram Mohan Roy set forth before all those who would follow in his footsteps perhaps for ages. In short it contains the

creed of the Brahma Samaj as he left it, and in it is summed up the meaning and the secret of his life-work. The following are some of the chief instructions with regard to the use of the building :

"That they, (*i.e.*, trustees). . . shall and do from time to time and at all times for ever here-after permit and suffer the said messuage or building, land, tenements, to be used, occupied, enjoyed, applied, appropriated, as and for a place of public meeting, of all sorts and descriptions people, without distinction, as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious and devout manner : for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe, but not under or by any name designation or title, peculiarly used for, and applied to, any particular Being, or Beings, by any man, or set of men, whatsoever :

"and that no graven image, statue or scripture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of any being, shall be admitted within the messuage, building, land, etc. and that no sacrifice, offering, or oblation of any kind or thing, shall ever be permitted therein and that no animal or living creature shall within or on the said messuage . . . be deprived of life, either for religious purposes or for food :

"and that no eating or drinking (except such as shall be necessary, by any accident, for the preservation of life), feasting or rioting be permitted therein or thereon :

"and that, in conducting the said worship or adoration, no object animate or inanimate, that has been, or is, or shall hereafter become, or be recognized, as an object of worship, by any man, or set of men, shall be reviled, or slightly or contemptuously spoken of, or alluded to, either in preaching, praying, or in the hymns, or other mode of worship that may be delivered or used in the said messuage or building :

"and that no sermon, preaching, discourse, prayer or hymn be delivered, made or used in such worship, but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe, to the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue, and the strengthening the

bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds :

"and also, that a person of good repute, and well-known for his knowledge, piety and morality, be employed by the said trustees . . . as a resident superintendent, and for the purpose of superintending the worship so to be performed, as in hereinbefore stated and expressed : and that such worship be performed daily, or at least as often as once in seven days."

It is worth noting that there is no mention in this creed of the Vedic basis or the Brahmin ministry, and that it is as universal as it could well be under the circumstances at that time. It is said that Ram Mohan Roy, while speaking of what he called Universal Religion used to be "so much moved that tears came out from his eyes." Moreover he had written a tract in the year 1829 bearing the name "The Universal Religion," in which he had gathered together from the Hindu Scriptures a few "religious instructions, founded on sacred authorities," a tract which was a kind of catechism of this Universal Religion. It was of this Universal Religion or Theism that he gave the outline in this Trust-Deed, an outline which for its catholic comprehensiveness and iconoclastic puritanism is unique in the history of Religion. Short of belief in the Incarnation on one side, and of Agnosticism and Atheism on the other, it contained within itself room for all the developments of the Brahma Samaj of later days, including even the last phase of the life Keshub Chunder Sen in which he gave flesh and blood as it were to the bare skeleton thus left by Ram Mohan Roy and made it a living reality, and in which this creed found its logical development in the one left by Keshub in his Nava Samhita.

This building was formally opened with an imposing ceremony attended by a large number of influential people on the 23rd of January 1830, a day which has been since observed as the principal day of the Brahma Samaj. Very soon after Ram Mohan was to leave this institution, which was the ripe fruit of his maturest experience, but it was in the hands of Providence, and under Its guidance it came to fulfill more than the most sanguine expectations that may have been formed by its founder and father.

VISIT TO EUROPE

Ram Mohan Roy had conceived long since a genuine admiration for Europe countries, especially so far as their advancement in arts and sciences, and their political institutions, the watchword of which was liberty, were concerned, and therefore as has been mentioned before in connection with his letter to Mr. Digby he was looking forward to his going to Europe some day, provided some suitable opportunity offered itself. Indeed there were great difficulties in such an undertaking in those days when to cross the *Kala pani*, the Black Waters as the sea was called, was considered an act of offence against the received doctrines of the Hindu religion, and when such an act was full of risks and perills great and unknown and therefore almost forbidding to the timid and conservative Hindu of that time. But Ram Mohan Roy was not to be deterred by these fears or popular prejudices, and as soon as he found his opportunity he took it. Not only was he one of the first among Indians to go as far as Europe, but when it is remembered that when he left India he was fifty-six years old, an age when even in these days of easy and quick travelling many would find it very hard to leave their country for Europe of America, the true significance of the enterprise which required several months of voyage and that too to a country unknown and very distant will be realized.

One of the immediate objects he had in view in going there was to represent the cause of the Mogul Emperor of Delhi before the British King, as the Emperor felt that he was not properly treated by the East India Company which had the virtual possession of the Mogul Empire. For this purpose the Mogul Emperor conferred on him the title of Rajah and appointed him his Envoy to the British King. Although neither his title of Rajah nor his position as an Envoy was recognized by the then Indian Government, he was none the less desirous of helping the Mogul Emperor in his difficulties and he even wrote to the Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, with whom he had co-operated so heartily in the matter of the abolition of Sutteeism in farewell letter as follows :

"Having at length surmounted all the obstacles of a domestic nature that have hitherto opposed my long-cherished intention

of visiting England, I am now resolved to proceed to that land of liberty by one of the vessels that will said in November and from a due regard to the purport of the late Mr. Secretary Stirling's letter of 15th January last, and other considerations, I have determined not to appear there as the Envoy of His Majesty Akbar the Second, but as a private individual. I am satisfied that in thus divesting myself of all public character, my zealous services in behalf of His Majesty need not be abated. I even trust that their chance of success may be improved by being thus exempted from all jealousy of a political nature to which they might by misapprehension be subjected."

Writing about him and his intended visit to England, one Mr. Young who was then in India wrote to Jeremy Bentham, the great philosopher of England, as follows :

"If I were beside you, and could explain matters fully, you would comprehend the greatness of the undertaking—his going on board ship to a foreign and distant land, a thing hitherto not to be named among Hindoos, and least of all among Brahmins. His grand object, besides the natural one of satisfying his own laudable spirit of inquiry, has been to set a laudable example to his benighted countrymen : and every one of the slow and gradual moves that he has made preparatory to his actually quitting India, has been marked by the same discretion of judgment. . . . The good which this excellent and extraordinary man has already effected by his writings and example cannot be told. But for his exertions Suttee would be in full vigour at the present day, and the influence of the priesthood in all its ancient force : . . .He is one of the most modest men I have ever met with. It is no small compliment to such a man that even a Governor-General like the present, who though a man of the most honest intentions, suspects everyone and trusts nobody, and who knows that R.M.R. greatly disapproves of many of the acts of the Government, should have shown him so much respect as to furnish him with introductions to friends of rank and political influence in England."

There is an epoch-making significance in such a man's going

to Europe. In him the best of the West saw the best of the East, and there began then that understanding between the East and the West, which, though clouded again and again by the dust raised by the clash of political and commercial interests, has grown from more to more and may ripen one day into that union, the thought of which is cherished so deeply by the most thoughtful and devout people in both Europe and Asia. As for the place and significance of this visit in the life and work of Ram Mohan Roy himself, in the life of his country and that of the British Empire, it is thus that his English biographer speaks of it :

> "Ram Mohan's three years in West form the crown and consummation of his life-work. . . . The supply the dramatic culmination of Ram Mohan's half century of service to his country and his kind. The epoch they mark in Hindu development only confirms and extends his religious record. He was the first Brahman to cross the ocean. He was the first Hindu of eminence who dared to break the spell which for ages the sea had laid on India. He set a conspicuous precedent to the host of educated Hindus who have since studied and travelled in Europe. The consequences for his countrymen are such as to make this act alone sufficient to secure for its author a lasting distinction. Its Imperial importance is not less striking. Ram Mohan Roy's presence in this country made the English people aware, as they had never been before, of the dignity, the culture, and the piety of the race they had conquered in the East. India became incarnate in him, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory. In the court of the King, in the halls of the legislature, in the select coteries of fashion, in the society of philosophers, and men of letters, in Anglican Church and Non-Conformist meeting-house, in the privacy of many a home, and before the wondering crowds of Lancashire operatives, Ram Mohan stood forth the visible and personal embodiment of our Eastern Empire. . . .As he had represented England to Indian, so now he interpreted India to England.

Max Muller wrote many years after of this visit as follows :

> "But for the sake of intellectual intercourse, for the sake of comparing notes, so to say, with his Aryan brothers, Ram Mohan Roy was the first who came from East to West, the

first to join hands and to complete that world-wide circle through which henceforth, like an electric current, Oriental thought could run to the West, and Western thought return to the East, making us feel once more that ancient brotherhood which unites the whole Aryan race, inspiring us with new hopes for a common faith, purer and simpler than any of the ecclesiastical religions of the world, and invigorating us for acts of nobler daring in the conquest of truth than any that are inscribed in the chronicles of our divided past."

Ram Mohan Roy left India for England on the 19th of November 1830, little knowing that he would live only three years more and no more return to his beloved land and give it the benefit of his enlarged experience. Besides, the one object mentioned above, *viz*, to plead the cause of the Mogul Emperor before the British King, he had other things to do in, England, the chief of them being to put before the British people and Parliament the cause of his country and to work for the better Government thereof in all departments. He had to plead the cause of the poor Suttee also before the British public against the orthodox people of India who had sent a petition to England to remove from the statute-book the new law for its abolition made by Lord William Bentinck. In addition to this political, social as well as philanthrophic mission of his own, he was very eager to take part in the cause of popular freedom in England, his visit to Europe taking place just when the great Reform Bill of the year 1833 was being discussed and England was in the midst of a great excitement. His enthusiasm for liberty was as great as ever, and while in Calcutta when the news of the French Revolution of 1830 came Ram Mohan Roy was so full of "enthusiasm that he could think and talk of nothing else." On his way to England, although at the Cape he had been seriously injured by an accident, he insisted on going to see two French frigates flying the revolutionary flag, the tricolour, at Table Bay. On the way further off they learnt that there was a change in the Ministry in England which forboded good for the cause of liberty, and at the news Ram Mohan was extremely glad. So great were his enthusiasm and excitement at such times, that some of his friends were even afraid lest his health might suffer there from.

Ram Mohan Roy reached England landing at Liverpool on

April 8th, 1831, taking thus nearly six months for the voyage. As soon as it was known that the distinguished visitor, whose fame had preceded him, was there, numbers of people flocked to visit him, with some of whom he had animated discussions on political and theological subjects. One of the eminent men he saw there was William Roscoe, the historian, who was some time since corresponding with him, both of them having published independently of each other a similar collection of the moral teachings of Jesus Christ. After exchanging their salutations Ram Mohan Roy said "Happy and proud am I—proud and happy to behold a man whose fame has extended not only over Europe, but over every part of the world." Mr. Roscoe, who was seriously ill then and died only a few weeks after, said "I bless God that I have been permitted to live to see this day."

From Liverpool he proceeded to London, being anxious to be present in the House of Commons to witness the second reading of the Reform Bill. On his way at Manchester he had a great welcome from the mill-operatives, all of whom struck work and turned out to see "the King of Ingee" as they called him. On his reaching London, although it was very late at night, still "long after he had retired to rest, the venerable Bentham, who had not for many years called on any one or left his house—found his way to the hotel, and left a characteristic note for him. This was a good earnest of what was to come in the following days and months and so great was the rush of visitors soon after his reaching London that Ram Mohan's discussions with them made him ill and the doctors had to forbid his seeing any one for some time.

The Unitarians, who had known him long since through his writings and with whose leaders he had been in correspondence for many years, were full of rejoicing to have found him whom they looked upon as one of their own among them. Soon after he was in London a meeting was held by the Unitarian Association to welcome him. At this welcome-meeting Dr. Bowring said among other things that he was as glad to meet and welcome Ram Mohan Roy as he would have been if a Plato or a Socrates had come from the dead, and further compared his visit to Europe to that of Peter the Great of Russia to the South of Europe, saying at the same time that Ram Mohan's visit involved a greater courage and at the same time was of much greater significance for India as well as the whole of the East. He said the following among other things :

"It was to us a delightful dream that we might on some occasion, welcome him here but though it was a hope, it was but a trembling one of which we scarcely dared to anticipate the fruition. But, its accomplishment has produced recollections so interesting, that this day will be an epoch in our history, and no one will forget the occasion when the Brahmin stood among us to receive our welcome, and the assurance of the interest we take in all he does and in all he shall do; to which I may add that our delight will be too great if we can in any way advance those great plains, the progress of which is the grand object of his exertions. Sir, I move with great pleasure "that the members of this Association feel a deep interest in the amelioration of the condition of the natives of British India : that we trust their welfare and improvement will never be lost sight of by the Legislature and Government of your country : that we have especial pleasure in the hope that juster notions and purer forms of religion are gradually advancing among them and that our illustrious visitor from that distant region, the Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, be hereby certified of our sympathy in his arduous and philanthropic labours, of our admiration for his character, of our delight in his presence among us, and of our conviction that the magnanimous and beneficent course which he has marked out for himself and hitherto consistently pursued, will entitle him to the blessings of his countrymen and of mankind as it will assuredly receive those of future generations."

But, it was not the Unitarians alone with whom he came in close contract while in England. The Anglicans as well as Non-Conformists also came to be known by him intimately in course of time, and he found friends among them too. Ram Mohan Roy attended often the churches of both the Unitarians and the Anglicans, the very first Sunday he was in England being divided by his attendance at both those places of worship.

In the same way, all political parties wanted to do honour to this great Indian. Even the Torics among whom there were men of the highest rank and families were not behind in recognizing his worth, and it is said that he was "for a considerable time much more in Tory than in Whig circles" and "with Lord Brougham he was on terms of the closest and most confidential intimacy, and in

short, he was honoured and esteemed by men of the most opposite opinions." While he was thus being recognized by the people and the peers of England as the Ambassador of the people of India, and as such they were doing their best to honour him, it is gratifying to learn that even the Ministers of the Crown "recognized his embassy and his title" from the Emperor of Delhi. The East India Company, which at first would not recognize either him or his title, was at last forced to bend a little and gave him a dinner where nearly eighty guests were present. In course of time he was presented to His Majesty by the President of the Board of Control, and he had a place assigned to him at the Coronation among the Ambassadors.

It was about this time that he was invited by the Select Committee of the House of Commons to give evidence with reference to the renewal of the Company's Charter for the consideration of which matter the committee had been appointed. Ram Mohan Roy in stead of appearing in person tendered his evidence with regard to various subjects such as the Revenue Settlement, Judicial System, etc., in the form of papers called "communications". In the first of these he appears as the champion of the rackrented ryot, whose condition, he says, has become increasingly worse under the Zemindars who have profited much by the Permanent Settlement of 1793. He advocates a similar permanency in the cultivator's tenure of the land, which would expose him no more to the exactions of the Zemindars and give him a permanent interest in the land. In this connection he even pleads for the settlement of some landlords from England of good families who might act as models to the native Zemindars. He points out that the ryot which has an inaleinable right over the soil he cultivates is sure to form the greatest bulwark of the Government which gives him this right, and thus frees it from the necessity of keeping a standing army. He concludes his first paper on the Revenue System "with beseeching any and every authority to devise some mode of alleviating the present miseries of the agricultural peasantry of India and thus discharge their duty to their fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects." In this paper on the Judicial System he advocates the system of regular appointment of native assessors in the civil courts for life, trial by jury after the model of which "the old Punchayat system may be reorganised," "since a Panchayat composed of the intelligent and respectable inhabitants,

under the direction of a European judge to preserve order, and a native judge to guard against any private influence, is the only tribunal which can estimate properly the whole bearings of a case, with the validity of the documentary evidence, and the character of the witnesses, who could have little chance of imposing false testimony upon such a tribunal," and which, he adds, "is the only system by which the present abuses consisting of perjury, forgery, and corruption can be removed." He further pleads for a separation of the offices of judge and revenue commissioner and of judge and magistrate : for the codification of various laws, and several other measures such as the appointment of Indian judges in a larger number, etc. He concludes the paper thus :

> "By gradually introducing the natives into the revenue departments under the superintendence of European officers (as I proposed in my Appendix A, on the revenue system), and in the judicial department in co-operation with them, the natives may become attached to the present system of Government, so that it may become consolidated, and maintain itself by the influence of the intelligent and respectable classes of the inhabitants and by the general goodwill of the people, and not any longer stand isolated in the midst of its subjects, supporting itself merely by the exertion of superior force. . . .On the contrary, should the proposed plan of combining Native with European officers have the effect of improving the condition of the inhabitants and of stimulating them with an ambition to deserve the confidence of the Government, it will then be enabled to form a judgment of the practicability and experience of advancing natives of respectability and talent to still higher situations of trust and dignity in the state, either in conjunction with or separately from their British fellow-subjects. In conclusion, I deem it proper to state, that in preparing my replies to these queries, I have not been biassed by the opinions of any individual whatsoever nor have I consulted with any person or even referred to any work which treats on the subject of India. I have for the facts consulted only my own recollections and in regard to the opinions expressed, I have been guided only by my conscience, and by the impressions left on my mind by long experience and reflection. In the improvements which I have ventured by suggest, I have kept

in view equally the interests of the governors and the governed, and without losing sight of a just regard to economy, I have been actuated by a desire to see the administration of justice in India placed on a solid and permanent foundation."

To these papers which he published in a separate volume, he attached a sort of preface, wherein he says the following with regard to himself among other things :

"From occasionally directing my studies to the subjects and events peculiarly connected with Europe, and from an attentive though partial, practical observation in regard to some of them, I felt impressed with the idea, that in Europe literature was zealously encouraged and knowledge widely diffused : that mechanics were almost in a state of perfection and politics in daily progress : that moral duties were, on the whole, observed with exemplary propriety notwithstanding the temptations incident to a state of high and luxurious refinement, and that religion was spreading, even amid scepticism and false philosophy. I was in consequence continually making efforts for a series of years, to visit the Western World, with a view to satisfy myself on those subjects by personal experience. I ultimately succeeded in surmounting to obstacle to my purpose, principally of a domestic nature : and having sailed from Calcutta on the 19th of November 1830, I arrived in England on the 8th of April following. The particulars of my voyage and travels will be found in a Journal which I intend to publish together with whatever has appeared to me most worthy of remark and record in regard to the intelligence, riches and power manners, custom, and especially the female virtue and excellence existing in this country."

Unfortunately this Journal of which mention is made here was never published, if written at all till the end of Ram Mohan's life, and thus Modern India, which would have liked to know very much the impressions made on the mind of this great Indian, who was the first to visit England, by the European civilization at that time, has been robbed of a great treasure indeed.

Another paper of very great importance on the subject of "Settlement in India by Europeans" was written by Ram Mohan

Roy at this time, and though the views that he therein advocates may look to-day rather strange as proceeding from a man of his wisdom and foresight, it shows him looking forward to India being in the future as great as and even greater than the United States of America, a sort of United States of Asia which hand in hand with England might enlighten the whole of Asia and thereby make a real union of the East and the West possible. It is a bold dream of the great reformer, and the means he suggests to realize it are equally bold. Long since he was in favour of European settlement in India, and in a public meeting in Calcutta held for the purpose of petitioning the Parliament to throw open the China and India trade and to remove the restrictions against settlement of Europeans in India, he had said as follows :

> "From personal experience, I am impressed with the conviction that the greater our intercourse with European gentlemen, the greater will be our improvement in literary, social and political affairs, a fact which can be easily proved by comparing the condition of those of my countrymen who have enjoyed this advantage with that of those who unfortunately have not had that opportunity and a fact which I could, to the best of my belief, declare on solemn oath before any assembly. As to the indigo planters, I beg to observe that I have travelled through several districts in Bengal and Behar, and I found the natives residing in the neighbourhood of indigo plantations evidently better clothed and better conditioned than those who liven at a distance from such stations. There may be some partial injury done by the indigo planters but, on the whole, they have performed more good to the generality of the natives of this country than any other class of Europeans, whether in or out of the service."

Evidently the views that he held while in India have been confirmed by a little more than a year's residence in England, where he came in very close touch with what was the best and highest in English society, and as such he gives them out in this paper, mentioning both the advantages and the disadvantages of such settlement in close detail, after weighing them very carefully. The advantages he speaks of are mostly of a political and educational kind such as "superior modes of cultivating the soil and improving

its products", "the introduction of many necessary improvements in the laws and judical system", the establishment in a larger measure of "schools and other seminaries of education for the cultivation of the English language throughout the country, and for the diffusion of a knowledge of European arts and sciences", as well as the introduction of a large amount of self-government which "would operate to continue the connection between Great Britain and India on a solid and permanent footing, provided only the latter country be governed in a liberal manner, by means of Parliamentary superintendence and such other legislative checks in this country as may be devised and established." He says among other things the following :

> "If, however, events should occur to effect a separation between the two countries, then still the existence of a large body of respectable settlers (consisting of Europeans and their descendants, professing Christianity, and speaking the English language in common with the bulk of the people, as well as possessed of superior knowledge, scientific, mechanical, and political) would bring that vast Empire in the East to a level with other large Christian countries in Europe, and by means of its immense riches and extensive population, and by the help which may be reasonably expected from Europe, they (the sttlers and their descendants) may succeed sonner or later in enlightening and civilizing the surrounding nations of Asia."

He then goes on to speak of the disadvantages which may arise from European ideas of racial superiority, difference of climate, etc., all of which, he says, can be remedied or prevented by various means which he himself suggests. He says with regard to the first that European settlers, for the first twenty years at least, should be from among educated persons of character and capital, since such persons are very seldom, if ever, found guilty of intruding upon the religious or national prejudices of persons of uncultivated minds : 2nd, the enactment of equal laws, placing all classes on the same footing as to civil rights, and the establishment of trial by jury (the jury being composed impartially of both classes), would be felt as a strong check on any turbulent or overbearing characters among Europeans."

He concludes the whole, however, with the following remark

which shows that he was not one of those who would leap in the dark, or who would rush in where angels might fear to tread, for it must be remembered that even the most forward among the English were not willing to promote or encourage such settlement; rather they were positively against it, and the Indians too of that day might well be against it :

> "At all events, no one will, I trust, oppose me when I say, that the settlement in India by Europeans should at least be undertaken experimentally, so that its effects may be ascertained by actual observation on a moderate scale. If the result be such as to satisfy all parties, whether friendly or opposed to it, the measure may then be carried on to a greater extent, till at last it may seem safe and expedient to throw the country open to persons of all classes. On mature consideration, therefore, I think I may safely recommend that educated persons of character and capital should now be permitted and encouraged to settle in India, without any restriction of locality or any liability to banishment, at the discretion of the government and the result of this experiment may serve as a guide in any future legislation on the subject."

The India of the future, such as Rajah Ram Mohan Roy depicted in this paper of his nearly a hundred years back, an India which it was the innermost wish of his heart to see rising in course of time, the wish being the father to the thought, is almost if not altogether before us in the New India that we see to-day. This New India is marked out by a number of characteristics such as the spread of arts and industries, of education and enlightenment, the use of the English language as the *lingua franca* by a large number of people, an ever-expanding self-government, a large amount of "opulence, intelligence and public spirit", and a forward look in all things, characteristics which Ram Mohan Roy wanted to see in the India of his heart's desire. But, it may be said that all this has been done without the European settlement which he advocated with so much zeal. It is true there has been no such settlement but instead there has been something that is far better and that is the presence and work of the Christian Missions, which have played no small part in the creation of the New India that we see. During the last century hundreds of these mission settlements have risen all over

the land, and thousands of European men and women of high character and education have given themselves to the service of this land, specially of the humblest, the poorest and the most miserable thereof. They have started innumerable schools and colleges and hospitals and tried to spread in all the ways they could health, comfort, light and culture. In an especial degree they have been the friends of the poor and the humble and the outcast, and have tried their utmost to improve their lot and to defend them from those of their own brethern who were better placed by the mere fact of their birth. By raising these people whose number is millions in the scale of life, they have raised a deadweight from the very heart of the Indian nation, which would have remained pressed down but for that ages more and would have hardly dared even to speak of freedom. They have brought with them large sums of money for the use of the Indian people without expecting any return except in the shape of more happiness, comfort and larger life among those for whom all this money has been spent. Thus, there have been realized all the advantages which Ram Mohan Roy expected as the result of European settlement in India, and many more, and what is still more important is that India has not suffered from a single one of those disadvantages which it would have inevitably owing to such settlement. While the European settlers would have been at least masters if not lords, the missionaries have been more of friends if not servants of the people. Besides, any European settlement that was not large enough to be a chief and ruling interest in the land, (in which latter case it would have been a far greater evil inasmuch as it would have created a new ruling caste which would have tried to keep the people of the land always under itself as the Aryan conquerors of India did with the Non-Aryans), would have been of the nature of commercial exploitation, and the European settlers would have always looked upon India as a field for making money which they might well spend in Europe and America just as a number of even Indian princes and millionares are doing in these days. From all these evils the missions have been quite free, and they have done all the good they could do with motives as disinterested as it is possible for human agencies to have. Moreover they represent not only one nation as the settlers would have largely done, but the whole of Europe and America, and that too almost in the best phase of European civilization and character. However, it has been said against them in the past and may be said

in the future that they do require change of faith on the part of most of those whom they would succour and give help to, and that it is a serious disadvantage. Even granting that it is an evil, especially from the national point of view, it must not be forgotten that it is an evil mixed with a great amount of good, for the majority of their converts, most of whom are from the lower and the lowest classes of Indians, while changing their faith from what can hardly be called Hinduism but is only primitive fetichism and worship of lower gods to Christianity leave behind them darkest superstition, often allied with rank ignorance and immorality. Besides, it must be remembered that in bringing Christianity to India, the Missions bring what is the best in the European civilization, which is the very salt that preserveth it and without which it would have been something awful and monstrous, and what is moreover of Asiatic origin. The Mission-work carried on by the people of Europe and America in Asiatic countries including India ought always to remind Europeans and Americans of their great and incalculable indebtedness in what they consider to be and what is rightly the best in their life and civilization to Asia, and the Asiatics ought to respect at least, even if they cannot accept wholly, what is thus brought to them as their own. It is these Missions which are meant to be in a pre-eminent degree so many inter-national and inter-continental Euro-Asian bonds of union, and to rise altogether above all national interests whatsoever. It may be said, and with justice, that they are often playing a part which is subsidiary and secondary, if not directly instrumental, to the interests of the various nations which they represent. This is because, unfortunately all human agencies after all partake of the weakness and frailty that are inherent in human nature, and they form no exception to that rule. However, in these days, in spite of all their defects it is these Christian Missions scattered all over Asia and Africa that form the chiefest, if not the only agency, that makes for the fraternal union of *all* nations and peoples upon this globe of ours. A still further step may be taken in course of time by Missions and Missionaries, and some day we may have instead of the missionaries who come and go like birds of passage having their base and home elsewhere in other lands a class of men who may be called missionary-settlers, who may make the lands they go to their home and be one with the people they work amongst, not only religiously but even socially and nationally. When this is done at first by individuals who

have the courage to take a forward step and then by little communities in the spirit of such people as the Moravians, that wonderful little body of Christians almost every one of whom, whether man or woman, was a missionary, a new day may dawn for both Asia and Europe, bringing their much wished for union nearer its realization, and a new chapter may be opened in the evangelization of the whole world. These missionary-settlers from Europe into Asia would be true apostles of Christ not only to Asia but to Europe also, for it would be in Asia that they would receive a new understanding of the teachings of their Master and Lord who was after all an Asiatic and who as such could not be altogether unrelated, in however hidden and mysterious a manner, to those undercurrents of Asiatic life which have made its civilization, in spite of all its vastness, variety and heterogeneity, one in character and given it, *i.e.*, Asia, to be the mother of all the religions of the world, and after being inspired with this new light they would go back to their original lands and would preach to the people there such new light and inspiration. With the advent of a larger number of such missionary-settlers as Robert de Nobili and his successors in the past and men like Andrews and Stokes in the present will come a true Euro-Asian unity, a larger and truer Christianity, and the Kingdom of Heaven will be nearer than ever.

But Ram Mohan Roy's aim was indeed more of a secular character, and that is why he was anxious to have the European settler of the landlord type. He was under any circumstances eager to see in India the same sort of civil and religious liberty that was enjoyed by the people of such countries as England, France and America, and he welcomed European settlement as perhaps one of the best means for the reproduction of the same in India. This can be seen from the way in which he was watching the struggle that was taking place in England at that very time between forces of liberty and of reaction. To him the Reform Bill of the year 1833 meant the triumph or fall of the liberal principles, on which depended, as he wrote to somebody at that time, "the welfare of England, nay of the world." To another he wrote in connection with the same : "The struggles are not merely between the reformers and anti-reformers, but between liberty and oppression throughout the world, between justice and in justice, and between right and wrong. But from a reflection on the past events of history, we clearly perceive that liberal principles in politics and religion

have been long gradually but steadily gaining ground, notwithstanding the opposition and obstinacy of despots and bigots." When the Bill was finally passed, he wrote to a friend as follows :

> "I am *now* happy to find myself fully justified in congratulating you and my other friends at Liverpool on the *complete* success of the Reform Bill, notwithstanding the violent opposition and want of political principle on the part of the aristocrats. The nation can no longer be a prey of the few who used to fill their purses at the expense, nay, to the ruin of the people, for a period of upwards of fifty years . . . . As I publicly avowed that in the event of the Reform Bill being defeated I would renounce my connection with this country, I refrained from writing to you or any other friend in Liverpool until I knew the result, Thank Heaven I can now feel pround of being one of your fellow-subjects, and heartily rejoice that I have the infinite happiness of witnessing the salvation of the nation, nay, of the whole world."

To Ram Mohan Roy, the cause of Liberty, was one all over the world, and in its triumph in one land he saw the triumph thereof all over the world. So enthusiastic was he in this cause that he event went to the length of telling the English people that in case the Bill did not pass he would renounce his connection with them, and probably go over to the United States as was stated then. Ram Mohan Roy was too earnest to say what he did not want to do, and possibly he may have thought of being a French citizen acquiring all the rights of citizenship under the banner of that free and liberty-loving land. This alone will show how great his love of liberty was and how he was prepared to do anything to promote the cause thereof.

Now that Rajah Ram Mohan Roy was satisfied that he could continue to be a member of the British Empire without his self-respect being wounded, we find him going to France on a friendly visit to that country for which he had so much admiration. Unfortunately we known very little as to how long he stayed there and how he found that country and its people. It is said that "he was more than once at the Table of Louis Philippe," the liberal king of France, which means that he came to know the highest society of Paris at close quarters. From France he thought of going

to Italy and Austria, but gave up the ideas as it was essential to know French in order to travel in Europe with any appreciable advantage in those days when the French language was the *lingua franca* of Europe to a far larger extent than it now is.

Meanwhile the mission or missions which brought him to England were being fulfilled one by one. The pension that was given to the Mogul Emperor had been substantially increased, and the appeal against the abolition of Suttee was finally rejected by the Imperial authorities, Ram Mohan Roy himself being present at the time of this decision. To him who had worked so hard for the abolition of that most inhuman and cruel rite, it must have been no ordinary occasion for heart-felt thanksgiving to God Almighty. The India Bill was being discussed in both the Houses, and it kept Ram Mohan Roy very busy and confined to London for months in the Year 1833. It was finally passed in the month of August. The Bill as it stood when it was passed was hardly satisfactory to him, and moreover, it was a cause of disappointment to him not only for the sake of his own country but also for the sake of the reformed Parliament of which he had expected much more. As a political reformer he was a "moderate one" (and being the pioneer in politics he could not be anything else in those days) as was said about him soon after his death in an article in the *Asiatic Journal*, and therefore most of his suggestions for the reform of the Government in India were quite mild, but even then much heed was not paid to them. Soon after this Bill received the Royal assent Ram Mohan Roy left London for Bristol, and while there his health failed suddenly and there came the end.

RELIGIOUS SYMPATHIES AND AFFINITIES

It has already been seen how interested Ram Mohan Roy was in the political institutions of Europe and especially those of England and what attitude he held towards them. He was already impressed by a number of things that he saw while in England, such as the love for liberty among all classes of people, higher culture among the upper classes and "especially the female virtue and excellence," besides "intelligence, riches and power, manners, customs," etc. The question may very well be asked as to what interest he took in the religious side of the English life and how he

was impressed by it. Religion was always the uppermost thing in all his life in India and he could not be indifferent to it while in England.

As regards this it has been already said how he was received and welcomed by the Unitarians soon after his coming to England. They remained true to him and he to them all the time he was in England, a period extending over two years. He found among them a number of friends and he was always a welcome guest with many of them. In his last days when he was financially embarrassed owing to money not being sent to him regularly from India, it was the Unitarian friends of his who stood loyal to him. He had undoubtedly till the last moment of his life much more in common with them than with any other body of religious people, whether in India or in England. His testimony to the truth of Unitarian Christianity as he gave it years ago in India has been already recorded. In his reply to the welcome-address given to him by the Unitarians in England he had said :

> "I am not sensible that I have done anything to deserve being called a promoter of this cause; but with respect to your faith I may observe. that too believe in the one God, and that I believe in almost all the doctrines that you do : but I do this for my own salvation and for my own peace. For the objects of your Society I must confess that I have done very little to entitle me to your gratitude or such admiration of my conduct. What have I done ? I do not know what I have done. If I have ever rendered you any services, they must be very trifling—very trifling I am sure. I laboured under many disadvantages. In the first instance, the Hindus and the Brahmins, to whom I am related, are all hostile to the cause : and even many Christians there are more hostile to our common cause than the Hindus and Brahmins. I have honour for the appelation of Christian : but they always tried to throw difficulties and obstacles in the way of the principles of Unitarian Christianity. I have found some of these here, but more there . . . . However, if this be the true system of Christianity, it will prevail notwithstanding all the opposition that may be made to it. Scripture seconds your system of religion, common sence is always on your side."

However, at the same welcome-meeting, one Rev. W.J. Fox said among other things :

> "The Rajah remarked to me the other day, with somewhat an indignant feeling, that he had been shown a painting of Christ, and that the painter was false, for he had given him the pale European countenance, not remembering that Jesus Christ was an oriental. The criticism was just. Those theologians have painted fasely too who have portrayed Christianity as a cold and intellectual religion, and not given it that rich oriental colouring of fancy and of feeling with which the Scriptures glow, and by which they possess themselves not only of the mind but the heart and soul of man."

Although this is true to a certain extent of the whole of Western Christianity, it is much more so with regard to Unitarian Christianity. And hence whatever be his intellectual sympathies with Unitarianism, Ram Mohan Roy seems to have kept what may be called an open mind, and was even favourably impressed by the various forms of Christianity that he saw in England, particularly the Evangelical side of the Established Church. With regard to this attitude of his, Dr. Carpenter, a Unitarian leader who came to know Ram Mohan Roy closely says :

> While in London . . . it was his system so far to avoid identifying himself with any religious body, as to make himself answerable for their acts and opinions and he also wished to hear preachers of other denominations who had acquired a just celebrity. He appears to have most frequented the church of Rev. Dr. Kenny who peculiarly interested him by the Christian spirit and influence of his discourse.

Ram Mohan Roy came in course of time to call this gentleman his "parish priest", and he was charmed with his "benignity, charity, liberality to the creeds of others, and honesty in the great political struggle for reform."

The Rev. William Jay of Bath, an Anglican preacher whom Ram Mohan Roy heard preach once and with whom he had some talks goes even to the length of saying that "from subsequent intercourse, as also from the testimony of others, he is pursuaded

that though at his first embracing Christianity he was Unitarian in his views, he was after he come to this country a sincere and earnest enquirer after evangelical truth, and would have professed his adoption of it had he not been prematurely removed by death."

Another minister of the Established Church, while dedicating to him one of his sermons on "Charity, the greatest of the Christian graces," says among other things in the dedication the following :

> Rajah, never shall I forget the long and profoundly interesting conversation which passed between us a few days ago . . . Nor will the noble declaration fade from my recollection, that you were not only ready to sacrifice station, property and even life itself to the advancement of a religion which in its genuine purity and simplicity proved its descent from the God of Love . . . but that you should consider the abstaining from such a course as the non-performance of one of the Highest Duti s imposed upon rational, social and accountable man . . . May God prosper your benevolent endeavours to spread . . . the knowledge of Christ and the practice of Christian Charity.

But, it was not the Established Church of England, which contained in it some of the best of men noted for their piety and learning in England, that alone impressed him very much. One is surprised and at the same time gratified to learn that Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, the great iconoclast and Hindu protestant reformer that he was, is not blind to the many excellencies of the Roman Church. He even defends it against the criticisms and attacks of many of his Christian friends, whether Trinitarian or Unitarian. He was anxious to see the faith and life of the people who professed Roman Catholicism in Italy itself, its headquarters, but he had to give up the idea later on as he did not know either Italian or French. The following passage which is taken from a letter of one Mr. T. Boots to Mr. Estlin shows very well what attitude his was towards the Roman Church :

> I called with him on Dr. Tuckerman, (the originator of domestic missions) of America, and when he had shaken

> hands with him (and others who were with him) he said, with his countenance lighted up by animation, "I am so happy to be with Unitarians." He did not move in the sect as same expected, and reflections were often passed upon him. Mr. Fox has touched this with admirable force in his sermon. One of his greatest desires was to see Catholicism at Rome. He admired the obedience to duties in the Catholics, and always spoke of them in this light with admiration, Whatever faults were mixed with their faith, he recognised in their attention to the poor and sick, the noblest spirit of Christianity. One of the last arguments I heard from him was his defence of them, against one who urged their acting under an artificial stimulus. He contended that what they did was enforced on all, by the very example of Christ and that the stimulus was their faith in the force and truth of that example.

It was in this way that Ram Mohan Roy kept his eyes open on all sides, and saw the good points of the various Christian Churches. His was a catholic spirit and temper, and hence he was free from those prejudices and prepossessions which are common to the ordinary man, and which make him blind to the good in things outside his limited fold. But though Ram Mohan Roy did not fail to notice all that was good and great, in practice at least if not in doctrine, in the various systems of the Christians faith, his own personal faith as he gave expression to it in the last weeks of his life to friends in private and public was Unitarian in its intellectual character, though he was not quite satisfied with Unitarianism being so exclusively rational. During these last days of his, he is reported to have said to Rev. John Foster, who himself bears witness to this fact in a letter that he wrote to Dr. Lant Carpenter after Ram Mohan's death, "that he avowed his belief, unequivocally, in the resurrection of Christ, and in the Christian miracles generally; at the same time he said that the internal evidence of Christianity had been the most decisive of his conviction." Dr. Jerrard, the Principal of the Bristol College, also wrote to the same that: (i) "Ram Mohan Roy expressed his belief in the divine authority of Jesus Christ as an inspired teacher of righteousness, and an accredited messenger of God. (ii) He explicitly declared that he believed in the miracles of Christ generally, and particularly in his resurrection, which he said was the foundation of the

Christian faith, and the great fact on which he rested his own hopes of a resurrection." Mr. Estlin, a Unitarian gentleman whom Ram Mohan Roy had known long since having corresponded with him for years while he was in India, wrote in his diary only a few days before Ram Mohan's death that the latter had declared that "he denied the Divinity of Christ, but distinctly asserted his belief in the Divine Mission of Christ." Mrs. Estlin from the information that she had from Miss Hare, the daughter of David Hare the great educationist of Calcutta, who was staying with him during these last days and acting as his nurse, wrote that "The Rajah read the Scriptures daily in Hebrew and Greek. Miss Hare often read them to him also; this was never omitted at night. He was also in a constant habit of prayer."

There was a controversy even after his death among his English friends as to whether he was Unitarian or Trinitarian in his belief while in England. Of course, even while he was in India he was spoken of as an "illustrious convert to Christianity," "an excellent Indian Christian and philosopher," "convert from Hinduism to Christianity" etc. As early as 1824, Sismondi, a French writer, in the Revue Encyclopedique, said with regard to him among other things : "He is among them, by a much juster title than the Missionaries, the Apostle of Christianity." But all this was understood more in reference to Unitarian than to Orthodox Christianity. Did he undergo any real change in his opinions and beliefs concerning the Christian truth after his coming to England ? Some said he did, while others said he did not. It must said that there was no such fundamental change in his faith as to justify those who said that Ram Mohan Roy was like them an orthodox Christian, though there is not the least doubt that his enthusiasm for Unitarianism had waned a good deal, and his aversion to orthodox Christianity which was so great and intense in Calcutta was changed into positive admiration for the great excellences of heart and spirit that he found among orthodox Christians. With regard to this what has been written by Mr. Sandford Arnot, a man who knew Ram Mohan Roy in Calcutta where he was acting as an assistant editor of the *Journal* which was suppressed and whence he was deported, and who had worked as Ram Mohan's Secretary in England, is worthy of notice. He says :

"As he advanced in age, he became more strongly impressed with the importance of religion to the welfare of society, and the pernicious effects of scepticism. In his younger years, his mind had been deeply struck with the evils of believing too much, and against that he directed all his energies : but in his later days he began to feel that there was as much, if not greater, danger in the tendency to believe too little.

This is worthy of notice with regard to the general tendency of Ram Mohan Roy's religious thinking which became more and more positive as he grew in years. So much was this the case that he was very much disconcerted at seeing the prevalence of scepticism and infidelity in England and France. He strongly disapproved of people talking of their doubts of Christianity or about the existence of God in the presence of women, and declared that if he were settled in Europe with his family, he would introduce them to none but religious people. As regards his attitude towards Unitarianism, Mr. Arnot says :

He evidently now began to suspect that the Unitarian form of Christianity was too much rationalized (or sophisticated, perhaps, I may say) to be suitable to human nature. He remarked in the Unitarians a want of that fervour of zeal and devotion found among other Sects, and felt doubts whether a system appealing to reason only was calculated to produce a permanent influence on mankind.

From this and other testimony we learn that Ram Mohan Roy was getting more and more into that frame of mind where between believing too much and too little, one chooses the former, and accordingly he was getting more and more interested in Trinitarian Christianity which he had at first condemned hailing Unitarianism as a victory of "simple precepts". It may be that it was the difference that be found between the Unitarians and the Trinitarians that led him to be in favour of believing too much which is only another name for orthodoxy, a difference that has led many others also in the same way, making them prefer Trinitarianism to Unitarianism, which last is after all richer in negations than in affirmations. The words "By their fruits ye shall judge them" have been always the truest test of the discipleship of Jesus Christ, and

"the fruits" may have weighed more and more with Ram Mohan Roy in his declining days than mere arguments and doctrines.

THE END

Rajah Ram Mohan Roy's work in England was finished. We do not know what he intended to do after this, or how much longer he wanted to stay in England. Probably before he had time to make any plans, he became seriously ill at Bristol where he was staying with some friends. The illness proved to be brain fever, and although all that could be done was done for him and he was tended by loving friends with whom he was staying, the disease took a fatal turn. On the 27th of September, 1833, Ram Mohan Roy breathed his last, the last word that was heard from his mouth being "*Aum*". It was thus that the spirit of the great Hindu Reformer passed away in a foreign land and amongst a foreign people.

The funeral that took place was of the simplest kind, and it was in the solemnity of sincere sorrow and silent prayers of a few friends that the earthly remains of the Rajah were consigned to the grave. It was thought absolutely essential that the ceremony should not seem in any the least way to be Christian, for that would have prejudiced the cause of his legitimate successors in their right to his property, apart from the harm it would have done to the various reform movements that he had started. Besides the Rajah himself had expressed a wish that in case he died in England, "a small piece of freehold ground might be purchased for his burying place, and a cottage be built on it for the gratuitous residence of some respectable poor person, to take charge of it." Such a place was supplied free of any charge by Miss Castle, a young English lady and a ward of Dr. Carpenter, in whose mansion called Stapleton Grave Ram Mohan Roy had breathed his last, and it was there that he was interred in the middle of the month of October, 1833. About a decade after, his remains were removed from there to the cemetery of Arno's Vale in the neighbourhood of Bristol. It was there that Dwarka Nath Tagore, (the grand father of Ravindra Nath Tagore) who had been a great friend of Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, erected a tomb of stone and in 1872, the following inscription was put thereupon :

"Beneath this stone rest the remains of Rajah Ram Mohan Roy,
A conscientious and steadfast believer in the Unity of the Godhead :
He consecrated his life with entire devotion to the worship of the Divine Spirit alone,
To great natural talents he united a thorough mastery of many languages,
And early distinguished himself as one of the greatest scholars of his day.

His unwearied labours to promote the social, moral and physical condition of the people of India, his earnest endeavours to suppress idolatry and the rite of Suttee, and his constant zealous advocacy of whatever tended to advance the Glory of God and the welfare of man, live in the grateful remembrance of his countrymen."

Immediately after his death, there were a number of notices of the death of the great Indian in the various papers of England, and several funeral sermons were preached in various churches, Anglican, Presbyterian and Unitarian, all testifying to the greatness and godness of Ram Mohan Roy who had made a number of friends among people of all classes and creeds during his stay in England.

Even sonnets, poems and hymns were written in his memory by Misses Harriet Martineau, Mary Carpenter, Dale and Acland. The universal feeling that was aroused in the mind of all who knew him there was that they had lost in him not only an extraordinary man but a personal friend, so much he had endeared himself to the people among whom he lived. All spoke very highly of his great gifts, especially in the realm of intellect, and his modesty, and humility and delicacy of feeling and manner towards women in particular were the special features of his character noted by all. Miss Carpenter wrote in his own life-time in 1831 to the great American Unitarian, Dr. Channing, these words :

"In the interval of politics we talk of the Christian Brahmin, Ram Mohon Roy. All accounts agree in representing him as a person of extraordinaty merit. With very great intelligence

and ability, he unites modesty and simplicity which win all hearts."

One Mrs. Davidson who had named one of her children Ram Mohan Roy, a child whose god-father he had become, said :

"For surely never was there a man of so much modesty and humility. I used to feel quite ashamed of the reverential manner in which he behaved to me. Had I been our Queen, I could not have been approached and taken leave of with more respect."

Dr. T. Boot, evidently a Unitarian gentleman, in writing to Mr. Estlin soon after Ram Mohan Roy's death, said :

"To me he stood alone in the single majesty of, I had almost said perfect humanity. No one in past history or in the present time ever came before my judgment clothed in such wisdom, grace and humality . . . . I have often talked with him on religious subjects, and have seen him among sceptics. He was never more free and unembarrassed and cheerful than when arguing with those who had a logical and acute mind. He often told me that he always introduced the subject when he met the historian of India (this was probably James Mill) and that his object in the argument was to show the insufficiency of human reason for the production of the highest moral worth, and the highest happiness. He even contended that 'the spirit that was in Christ Jesus and unknown and unrevealed till his mission, directed the human mind to more elevated, purer and more disinterested thoughts, motives and actions, than the noblest philosophy of antiquity did or could do, that the Christian precepts left nothing to desire or to hope for through futurity, that as a system of morality, it was alone able to lead to purity and hapiness here and to form the mind for any conceivable state of mind hereafter' . . . . He argued only for the sense of religious obligation, and emphatically assured us that all his experience of life had exhibited to him virtue and self-respect and happiness in its true elements, even in proportion to the intensity of that sense. He was the humblest of human beings, and ardent as he was in the faith

of his selection he was sensibly disturbed if religion was spoken lightly of, or argued but irreverentially before women. He would often smile and speak jocosely when the turn of the discussion made him uneasy from his sensibilities towards women being awakened; and those who knew him, saw by his manners and looks that he adopted this lightness of manner in hope that the subject would be dropped. . . . I can only say that at every visit my admiration of him grew with my intimacy with his mind and actions. He was the most liberal, the most amiable, the most candid of men. His generosity was unbounded : his most touching politeness was an instinct of his nature, it never left him to his most familiar associates."

Another correspondent of Dr. Channing, Miss Lucy Aikin wrote of him :

He is indeed a glorious being, – a true sage, as it appears, with the genuine humility of the character, and with more fervour, more sensibility, a more engaging tenderness of heart than any class of character can justly claim.

His person has been described by the Court Journal, October 5, 1833, which was perhaps the next issue after Ram Mohan's death as follows :

The Rajah, in the outer man, was cast in nature's finest mould : his figure was manly and robust : his carriage dignified, the forehead towering, expansive and commanding : the eyes dark, restless, full of brightness and animation, yet liquid and benevolent, and frequently glistening with a tear when affected by the deeper sensibility of the heart : the nose of Roman form and proportions : lips full and indicative of independence, the whole features deeply expressive, with a smile of soft and peculiar fascination which won irresistably the suffrages to whom it was addressed. His manners were characterized by suavity blended with dignity, varying towards either point according to the company in which he might be placed. To ladies his politeness was marked by the most delicate manner, and his felicitous mode of paying them a compliment gained him very many admirers among the high-born beauties of

Europe. In conversation with individuals of every rank and of various nations and professions, he passed with the utmost ease from one language to another, suiting his remarks to each and all in excellent taste and commanding the astonishment and respect of his hearers.

It was in argument, however, that this exalted Brahmin was most conspicuous. He seemed to grapple with truth intuitively, and called in invective, raillery, sarcasm, and sometimes a most brilliant wit to aid him in confuting his opponent : if precedent was necessary, a remarkably retentive memory and extensive reading in many languages supplied with a copious fund; and at times with a rough, unsparing and ruthless hand he burst asunder the meshes of sophistry, error and bigotry, in which it might be attempted to entangle him."

One of the best of these personal impressions is the one given by Mr. Adam, the same who had worked with Ram Mohan Roy for several years in the cause of Unitarianism, in a lecture of his on the Life and Labours of the Rajah, several years after his death. He says :

I was never more thoroughly, deeply, and constantly impressed than when in the presence of Ram Mohan Roy and in friendly and confidential converse with him, that I was in the presence of a man of natural and inherent genius, of powerful understanding, and of determined will, a will determined with singular energy and uncontrollable self-direction, to lofty and generous purposes. He seemed to feel, to think, to speak, to act, as if he could not but do all this, and that he must do it only in and from and through himself, and that the application of any external influence, distinct from his own strong will, would be the annihilation of his being and identity. He would be free or not be at all. . . . Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul—freedom not of action merely, but of thought. . . . This tenacity of personal independency, this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment on his mental freedom was accompanied by a very nice perception of the equal right of others, even of those who differed most widely from him.

Since then, during the last century, posterity has done full justice to him, and to-day he stands before the whole of India by universal acceptance and acclamation as the Father of Modern India. But of all the estimates that have been made of him, perhaps none is so carefully weighed and true to facts as the one given at the end of his excellent English biography, which sums up much of the meaning of Ram Mohan Roy's life and work. It stands as follows :

> Ram Mohan Roy stands in history as the living bridge over which India marches from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future. He was the arch that spanned the gulf that yawned between ancient caste and modern humanity, between superstition and science, between despotism and democrary, between immobile custom and a conservative progress, between a bewildering polytheism and a pure, if vague, Theism. He was the mediator of his people, harmonizing in his own person, often by means of his own solitary sufferings, the conflicting tendencies of immemorial tradition and of inevitable enlightenment. . . . He embodies the new spirit which arises from the compulsory mixture of races and faiths and civilizations—he embodies its freedom of inquiry, its thirst for science, its large humane sympathies, its pure and sifted ethics : along with its reverent but not uncritical regard for the past, and prudent, even timid disinclination towards revolt. But in the life of Ram Mohan we see what we hope yet to have shown us in the progress of India, that the secret of the whole movement is religious. Amid all his wanderings Ram Mohan was saved by his faith. . . . He was a genuine outgrowth of the old Hindu stock; in a soil watered by new influences, and in an atmosphere charged with unwonted forcing power, but still a true scion of the old stock. The Rajah was no merely occidentalized Oriental, no Hindu polished into the doubtful semblance of a European. Just as little was he, if we may use the term without offence, a spiritual Eurasian. If we follow the right line of his development we shall find that he leads the way from the Orientalism of the past, not to, but through Western culture, towards a civilization which is neither Western nor Eastern, but something vastly larger and nobler than both. He preserves continuity throughout, by virtue of

his religion, which again supplied the motive force of his progressive movement. The power that connected and restrained, as well as widened and impelled, was religion. Ram Mohan thus presents a most instructive and inspiring study for the New India of which he is the type and pioneer. . . . There can be little doubt that, whatever future the destinies may have in store for India, that future will be largely shaped by the life and work of Ram Mohan Roy. And not the future of India alone. We stand on the eve of an unprecedented intermingling of East and West. The European and the Asiatic streams of human development, which have often tinged each other before, are now approaching a confluence which bids fair to form the one ocean-river of the collective progress of mankind. In the presence of that great Eastern Question, with its infinite ramifications, industrial, political, moral and religious, the international problems of passing hour, even the gravest of them, seem dwarfed into parochial pettiness. The nearing dawn of these unmeasured possibilities only throws into clearer prominence the figure of the man whose life-story we have told. He was, if not the prophetic type at least the precursive hint, of the change that is to come."

2

RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY

ASHOKE CHATTERJEE

The Encyclopaedia Britannica is the most trusted book of reference in the English language. Trusted by scholars, students, teachers and the press for its careful survey, analysis and scrutiny of all matters that it deals with in its tens of thousands of chosen subjects. The committee of experts who handle this extensive work of collecting correct and comprehensive information about all things that are of interest to the intelligent public, consists of scholars chosen by reliable academicians from the Universities of Britain and America. The Encyclopaedia Britannica therefore, is a thoroughly dependable book of refence. It avoids partisanship, current, prejudices and dogma related to all matters on which there are various points of view and opinion.

In writing about the life and work of Raja Rammohun Roy on the occasion of the bicentenary of his birthday we have, therefore, chosen to quote from the summary biography of this great reformer as published in the Encyclopaedia Britannica about 25 years ago, when no one had yet contemplated the celebradon of his 200th birthday, nor had the forces been mobilised which concentrated on the work of glorifying the memory of a superman of rare calibre or belittling his contributions towards Hindu Reformation and the socio-political rebirth of the Indian nation. The short biography of the great Raja was written by Dittakavi Subrahmanya Sarma, Principal Emeritus of Vivekananda College, Madras, who, being a South Indian scholar, was in a position to take an impartial view of the important part that Raja Rammohun Roy played in

reviving shastric studies and introducing English education in India. It was Raja Rammohun Roy who first attempted, in modern times, to liberate Hindu thought and beliefs from superstitions and to rescue the Indians from their decadent practices which they indulged in from a mistaken conception of shastric teachings. He looked at the sacred books of the Hindu, with the eyes of detached enquiry of a true scholar and taught the world the truth that he found in the *Upanishads* and other philosophical treatises of ancient India. His findings were inspired by his deep attachment to the ancient civilization of his motherland and by his disillusionment with the parody of that glorious culture that he found in the debased practices of his compatriots which they carried out in the name of obeying the dictates of the religious texts. Before going into any details of the life and work of Raja Rammohun Roy, let us first quote from the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

"Ram Mohun Roy (1772-1833) the founder of the Brahmo Samaj (q.v.) in India, was not only a great religious leader and social reformer but also a far-seeing statesman who indicated the lines of progress for India under British rule. Hence, he is some times called the father of modern India. He was born in 1772, in a village in Burdwan district in Bengal During the first 30 years of his life he seems to have travelled widely outside his province and mastered several languages—Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Greek and English in addition to Bengali, his mother tongue. In 1803, he secured an appointment under the East India Company, served its administration in various capacities until he retired in 1815 and settled in Calcutta. There he began his great agitation against the rite of suttee (q.v.) and vigorously kept it up until suttee was abolished by Lord William Bentink in 1829.

"During 1815-19, Ram Mohun published his translations of the *Upanishads* and his paper on Hindu theism. His object in these and similar writings was to wean his countrymen from what he regarded as the corruptions of medieval Hinduism and the evils of Hindu society, *viz.*, idol worship, animal sacrifices, polygamy and the caste system, and to draw their attention to the original purity of the teachings of Vedanta. . . . It was for achieving the object that he later founded the Brahmo Samaj (1828).

"Ram Mohun next turned his attention to the problem of education, and in a famous letter to Lord Amherst (1823) made a vigorous plea for scientific and English education for India in

preference to the traditional Sanskrit education. He was as great a champion of political freedom as he was of scientific education; his memorial for the repeal of the Press Ordinance of 1823, has been hailed as the *Areopagitica* of Indian history. Ram Mohun's letters show that he greatly admired the progress of freedom in Europe and hoped that India through its British connection would grow in knowledge and freedom and ultimately claim equal partnership with Britain.

"In 1830, he went to England on behalf of the titular emperor of Delhi to plead his cause before the British government. He fell ill there and died at Bristol on September 27, 1833."

This short sketch of the life of Raja Rammohun Roy highlights the important facts relating to the Raja's character and to his contributions to the Hindu reformation that took a definite shape in the nineteenth century. Even when he was adolescent student in Patna, studying Arabic and Persian, he wrote a booklet in which he condemned idolatry and pleaded the cause of monotheism. He was chastised by his father for this and left home to travel all over North India. He eventually arrived in Tibet and was in Lhasa, studying Mahayana Buddhism with the help of some Lamas who resented his critical attitude and, but for the ladies of their families, might have killed the young seeker after truth. The Tibetan women hid him and arranged for his escape, back to India. This made the Raja a lifelong champion of women and he never hesitated to be a whole-hearted supporter of the women's cause. A journey to Lhasa at the age of sixteen, over the snow-bound passes, undaunted by the dangers that all travellers to Tibet had to face; was a fact which fully demonstrated the courage, tenacity and the rare spirit of adventure of young Rammohun Roy. An English commentator had said that had Rammohun only crossed over to Lhasa at the age of sixteen in the seventeen hundred eighties, that single great adventure should have made him famous as a youthful explorer. When going through the Himalayan passes he was often obstructed by fallen boulders which he had to move to one side by using all his strength, so that he could get along. There were also the fear of wild animals which frequented those heights. Rammohun had picked up many North Indian languages by this time and had become proficient in Hindi and Urdu. His visit to Lhasa which lasted for about two years and the study of Mahayana Buddhism gave him a working knowledge of Pali and Tibetan. When he returned to

India he went back to Patna and Banaras to continue his study of Arabic and Sanskrit.

After this he remained involved in family affairs upto 1797, when, as a result of difference of opinion about religion and moral principles with his father and elder brother he severed his connections with them and set up his own business independently.

We find that Rammohun Roy organised his business in a sound and gainful manner during the year 1797-1803. He purchased two Taluks at auction in 1799 and he appointed one Rajiblochan to manage these estates. Rajiblochan began to send the income derived from these lands to Rammohun regularly.

In 1801, Rammohun become known to John Digby and began to speak English of a sort, but he could not write correct English. He also had dealings with Mr. Woodforde, Collector of Dacca, who later appointed him as his Dewan. When Mr. Woodforde resigned his post, Rammohun Roy also left his job and returned to Calcutta.

In 1803 Rammohun Roy published his pamphlet. Tufat-ul-Muwahhidini in support of monotheism. This booklet was writt n in Persian and had an introduction in Arabic. In 1805, Rammohun Roy accompanied John Digby to his various places of work. He had by now become quite proficient in English both spoken and written. From this time onward his association with Digby became closer year by year. When Digby officiated as Magistrate Rammohun served as sheristadar in the criminal court. In 1807, he went with Digby to Jessore where the former had been appointed Collector. From Jessore they went to Bhagalpur and later returned to Jessore. After this Digby was appointed Collector of Rangpur and took Rammohun Roy with him. In October 1809, Digby made Rammohun Dewan but was reprimanded by the Board of Revenue for his action. Digby made a strong and spirited protest against this. Digby resigned from service in 1814 and went away to England. Rammohun had during this period begun to take to a closer study of the Shastras. The name of Nandakumar Vidyalankar, who lived with Rammohun at Rangpur, came up in this connection. In 1815, Rammohun Roy took up residence in Calcutta permanently and founded the Atmiya Sabha in the same year. He also published his Bengali translations of Vedanta Grantha and Vedanta Sar in the same year. We find, therefore, that Rammohun Roy's worldly activities during these years did not

in any way restrict his intellectual and spiritual aspirations nor interfere with his work of expounding the Shastras and making them better known to the general public. He published many books and tracts from 1815, onward and the following were the more important among them.

1816, May—Bhattacharyer Sahit Bichar (in Bengali).
1816, June—Translation into Bengali and English Kena Upanishad.
1816, July—Translation into Bengali and English Iso-panishad, also published an English abridgement of Vedanta.
1816, May-Dec.—Utsabananda Vidyabagisher Sahit Bichar (in Sanskrit).
1817 —Translates into Bengali the Vedanta Sutra of Badarayana according to Shankara's interpretation. Also Vedanta Sar in Bengali and abridged Vedanta in English.
1817, Aug-Oct.—Translates Katha Upanishad and Mandyukyopaishad in Bengali, Kena Upanishad in English and publishes "A Defence of Hindu Theism" and a second defence of Vedic Monotheism.

During the years 1817-1823, Rammohun Roy carried on extensive controversies with learned men of the orthodox view point relating to idolatry and the Shastras. His publications continued and he published in :

1818 —Gayatrir Artha (in Bengali)
1818, June—Goswamir Sahit Bichar (in Bengali), Sahamaran Visayeh Prabartak a Nibartak Samvad. Dvitiy somvad. Also a translation into English of Katha Upanishad.

In 1819, Digby came back to India from England. About the same time Rammohun Roy had his controversy with Subrahmanya Sastri.

Rammohun published his first tract against the burning of widows (Suttee) in 1819. There was also a conference among those

Mission Press had been publishing Rammohun Roy's rejoinder upto this time : but they began to refuse now and Rammohun Roy, therefore, established a printing press called the Unitarian Press in Dharmatala St., Calcutta. In 1823, he translated the Kena Upanishad into English and published his "Final Appeal to the Christian Public." In this he made full use of his knowledge of Hebrew and Greek.

In 1823, the Acting Governor General John Adam promulgated the Press ordinance suppressing Freedom of the Press. Rammohun Roy and his friends placed a Memorial to the Supreme Court against this but it was rejected. An appeal to the King in Council was made after this. In 1823, the publication of the "Mirat-ul-Akbar" was stopped in protest against this attack on the freedom of the press. In the same year Rammohun wrote his famous letter to Lord Amherst for the introduction of education through English.

In 1825, Rammohun Roy published the translation of his Sanskrit tract on different modes of worship and a Bengali booklet named Brahmanistha Grihaster Lakshman (characteristics of a Householder devoted God). Rammohun Roy lost his mother in 1826. He established a Vedanta College in the same year. In 1827, he brought out his Sanskrit Gayatriya Brahmopasanabidhanam (Rules relating to the worship of Brahman in accordance with the Gayatri). He also published Vajrasuchi (in Sanskrit and Bengali) during the same year. On the 20th of August 1827, Rammohun Roy established the Brahmo Samaj and published the books relating to the worship of Brahma and devotional songs in 1828. His three appeals about the Precepts of Jesus were printed in a single volume in America about the same time.

In 1829, Suttee was abolished by law by Lord William Bentinck and there was a movement against the abolition among Indians as well as British officials. It was planned to carry on propaganda in England for the annulment of this law prohibiting the burning of widows on the funeral pyres of their deceased husbands. In 1830, Rammohun Roy published an essay on the Rights of Hindoos over Ancestral properties according to the Law of Bengal. This was followed by Eight Letters on the Hindoo Law of Inheritance, all of which appeared in 1830. He also published an Abstract of the Arguments for stopping the Burning of Widows. In November

1830, Raja Rammohun Roy started for England where he stayed till his death at Bristol on the 27th September, 1833.

The above chronological statement regarding the life and work of Raja Rammohun Roy shows what a remarkably talented man the Raja was. Never was there such a combination of great scholarship, spiritual urge, zeal for social and political reform and businessacumen found in a single person. One may add to this his great attachment to the highest ideals of liberty, freedom and Human Rights. During the short period that he stayed in England he came in contact with persons like Robert Owen and Jeremy Bentham, who recorded their appreciation of the great Indian in terms of unstinted praise, comparing him to Erasmus and even to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. During this time he met many political leaders of other countries and was accepted as a great political thinker. He was invited to dinner by the King of England and the King of France. Jeremy Bentham was so struck by Rammohun's style of English that he wrote in one of his letters to Rammohun "Your works are made known to me by a book in which I read a style which but for the name of a Hindoo I should certainly have ascribed to the pen of a superiorly educated and instructed Englishman." Comparing James Mill's style with Rammohun's, Bentham wrote about Mill's History of India ". . . though as to style I wish I could with truth and sincerity pronounce it equal to yours".

Rammohun Roy's great thirst for knowledge remained unquenched till the end of his life. He had very good knowledge of Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Pali, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali and English. He also knew French, Italian, Spanish, Tibetan and some north Indian languages. His knowledge of abstract philosophy, theology, law, politics and history was vast, analytical and precise; and he could state his own point of view on any subject of controversy in the manner of a highly talented lawyer. Rammohun Roy was indomitable in his courage and definance of evil social customs. He constantly risked his life in boldly condemning Suttee and idolatry. He incurred the wrath of the conservatives by his support of Women's education, equality in the sphere of legal rights, widow remarriage and by his criticism of child marriage and other customs which stood in the way of social progress. The Raja was a great reformer as well as a great revivalist. He was all for teaching Indians science and other progressive

ideas through English education; but devoted himself very ardently to the work of making known to the world the truth about the sacred books of the Hindoos. His whole idea was to make Indians as great intellectually and morally in terms of modern knowledge and humanistic ideals as they had been in the days of the Rishis, the profundity of whose knowledge was amazingly deep and all embracing. Raja Rammohun Roy is truly called the father of modern India as it was he who inspired a galaxy of men and women in India during the hundred years ending with the First World War. Debendranath Tagore, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshub Chandra Sen, Swamy Vivekananda, Dayanand Saraswati, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurovinda, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Prafulla Chandra Roy and a host of intellectuals, nation builders and freedom fighters can be named as the successors of Raja Rammohun Roy. It is rightly thought that had the Raja not been born towards the end of the eighteenth and the dawn of the nineteenth century, India would have developed as a cheap imitation of England. There would have been no intellectual and spiritual renaissance in India and the subcontinent would have been swamped by a colourless variety of Christianity and a type of education that only helped people to imitate superficially without diving deep for the pearls of true knowledge and wisdom.

Raja Rammohun Roy was for ever a champion of liberty and freedom; a Knight Errant who traversed the length and breadth of his own country as well as of other lands to destroy the dragons that lurked in the deep dark corners of the social-political mind. His experiments in the field of reforming religious institutions were the expression of his desire to unite all mankind in a brotherhood of common moral endeavour. William Adam, a Baptist Missionary who became a Unitarian wrote about the Raja, "He would be free or not at all . . . . Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul . . . freedom not of action merely, but of thought . . . . This tenacity of personal independence, this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment on his mental freedom was accompanied with a very nice perception of the equal rights of others, even of those who differed most widely from him." When the Neapolitans were crushed back into servitude by the powers of Europe he wrote ". . . . I consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own and their enemies as ours. Enemies of liberty and friends of despotism have never been, and never will be,

ultimately successful" (Letter dated August 11, 1821). When the spanish colonies freed themselves in South America he gave a public dinner at the Town Hall. When asked why he had thrown this party he exclaimed, "What, ought I to be insensible to the sufferings of my fellow creatures wherever they are, or however unconnected by interests, religion or language ?"When he heard about the presence of French ships flying the flags of free France, while he was on his way to England and his ship was in harbour in the Cape of Good Hope, he broke his leg in trying to rush up quickly to see the flags and to salute the same. When in England he said that the Reform Bill of 1832, was a record of the struggle between reformers and antireformers, a "struggle between liberty and tyranny throughout the world, between justice and injustice and between right and wrong."

When the Acting Governor-General in Council promulgated a Press Ordinance in India Rammohun Roy prepared and submitted a petition to the Supreme Court which was rejected. He then prepared a Memorial to the King (which also was rejected). In this Memorial he said, " . . . . Your Majesty is well aware, that a Free Press has never yet caused a revolution in any part of the world, because, while men can easily represent the grievances arising from the conduct of the local authorities to the Supreme Government, and thus get them redressed, the grounds of discontent that excite revolution are removed; whereas, where no freedom of the Press existed, and grievances consequently remained unrepresented and unredressed, innumerable revolutions have taken place in all parts of the globe, or if prevented by the armed forces of the Government, the people continued ready for insurrection.

> "It is well known that despotic Governments naturally desire the suppression of any freedom of expression which might tend to expose their acts to the obloquy which ever attends the exercise of tyranny or oppression and the argument they constantly resort to is, that the spread of knowledge is dangerous to the existence of all legitimate authority, since, as a people became enlightened, they will discover that by a unity of effort, the many may easily shake off the yoke of the few, and thus become emancipated from the restraints of power altogether, forgetting the lesson derived from history, that in countries which have made the smallest advances in civilization anarchy

and revolution are most prevalent, while on the other hand, in nations the most enlightened, any revolt against Governments, which have guarded inviolate the rights of the governed, is most rare and that the resistance of a people advanced in knowledge, has ever been—not against the existence—but against the abuses of the Governing power . . . . The more enlightened a people become, the less likely are they to revolt against the governing power, as long as it is exercised with justice tempered with mercy, and the rights and privileges of the governed are held sacred from any invasion."

As a great advocate of human rights and freedom Raja Rammohun Roy naturally disapproved of the caste system and of the multiplicity of mutually antagonistic religious creeds. The caste system interferred with the free exercise of human rights at every step and the religious creeds, by their variety and intolerant attitude towards one another prevented the growth of brotherly sentiments among the peoples of India. He also desired that education of a modern scientific type should be introduced in our country so that the clouds of base ignorance and superstitution could be dispelled and the people could grow and develop in the clear light of true knowledge and civilized outlook. The British took advantage of our ignorance and of the obscurity of vision that too many creeds created in us. They therefore, tried to give preferential treatement to Christians as against Hindoos and Moslems, which was not in keeping with the principles of justice and freedom. Raja Rammohun Roy protested against the Jury Act of 1827, which debarred Hindoos and Moslems from being a juror of trial of Christians under trial but allowed Christians to be in juries trying Hindoos or Moslems. He suggested to the British that they should by practising true justice, help India to grow as an "ally of the British Empire" and not as an "annoying and determined enemy." A people which received justice from its rulers and were not overtaxed maintained the rule of the law willingly and even agreed to fight for the rulers in case of war. Such conditions, thought Raja Rammohun Roy, were certainly preferable to keeping down a vast and over-taxed population by force of arms of a large and expensively maintained standing army. These and similar ideas show what a great statesman Raja Rammohun Roy

was and how deeply and analytically he went into the fundamental principles of public finance and government.

Raja Rammohun Roy was all for the spread of scientific education through the medium of English but not at the cost of sacrificing our own languages. Raja Rammohun Roy is rightly considered to be the father of modern Bengali prose. He wrote text books of Bengali Grammar and analysed Bengali syntax. He also introduced punctuation marks in Bengali prose composition, and composed many hymns, some of which are still—sung in religious assemblies in Bengal. The "*Sambad Kaumudi*", a Bengali journal was published from 1821 and it contained matters of political, historical, literary and scientific interest. He can therefore be considered to be the first Indian in modern times who tried to introduce Western education in India and to open the gates of our conservatism to new ideas and progressive reforms. He was opposed at that time by the decadent defenders of the established order, and these solidiers of social decay, though defeated in the field by Rammohun and his successors, passed on their hatred of the great reformer to their desendants, who, even now try to belittle what the Raja did, even though they take the fullest advantage of the reforms brought about by Rammohun Roy's persistent war against superstitution, evil social practices and obscure dogma. In modern India Western science has taken deep root and the ideas of human progress have been synthesized with the classical intellectual aspirations of the educated people. Women's emancipation has been fully achieved and most degenerate practices and beliefs have taken shelter in the darkest corners of Indian life. All this progress has been possible because a great soul came to illuminate our civilization 200 years ago.

Rammohun Roy's connection with the work of liberation of women in India is usually associated with his agitation against the evil practice of Suttee or Sahamaran. But in fact he was foremost among modern Indians in the work of demanding equal rights for women in all spheres of life. The following excerpts from the Centenary Volume of the Bethune College of Calcutta (published in 1949), Mr. Jogesh Chandra Bagal, an eminent historian and scholar of great reputation, wrote : "Raja Rammohun Roy, the greatest of Indian reformers in modern times, started a movement against Suttee even before the twenties. To popularise this movement, he used to issue pamphlets in Bengali. In these much

stress was laid *Inter alia* on the rights and claims of women. He also advocated the cause of women's education so that they might be conscious of their own position in society and discharge their duties adequately to themselves as well as to the people at large." Dr. Kalidas Nag, the Editor of the Volume referred to the Raja's above mentioned contributions to women's progress in India and said, "The immortal harbinger of chivalry and life-long champion of womanhood was the great Raja Rammohun Roy." Dr. Kalidas Nag is considered to be an idologist of international standing who had been, time and again, invited out to lecture at various universities in Europe, the Americas, Asia and Australasia on Indian History. Scholars all over the world accepted his assessment of the facts of Indian history as precise and dependable. We have already mentioned the names of two famous contemporaries of Raja Rammohun Roy, who tastified to the remarkable ability and intellectual eminence of the great Indian. They were Rebert Owen and Jeremy Bentham. We shall now examine what M. Romain Rolland, the well known French savant, has written about Raja Rammohun Roy in his book "The Life of Ramakrishna" which was published in India in 1930, by Advaita Ashrama, Almorah. Regarding the spiritual life of Raja Rammohun Roy. M. Rolland has quoted from an article by Dhirendranath Chowdhuri entitled "Ram Mohun Roy, the Devote" which was published in The *Modern Review* of October 1928. The quotation is as follows, "'. . . . The Raja would be frequently found absorbed (in Brahmasamadhi) all his distractions notwithstanding . . . . For the Raja Samadhi is not an abnormal physiological change of the body that can be effected at will, not unconsciousness generated as in sound sleep, but the highly spiritual culture of perceiving Brahman in *all* and the habit of surrendering the self to the higher self. Atmasakshatkar to him was not to deny the existence of the world . . . but to perceive God in every bit of perception . . . Ram Mohun was preeminently a sadhaka . . . . Though a Vedantist in exery pulse of his being, he did not fail to perceive that the Upanishads were not sufficient to satisfy the Bhakti hankerings of the soul, nor was he able to side with the Bhakti cult of Bengal. . . ."

M. Rolland found that Raja Rammohun Roy was also a great reformer in the material field of life. Referring to "his innumerable reforms or attempted reforms" M. Rolland said "let it suffice to mention among the chief—Sati (the burning of widows) which he

proved to be contrary to the sacred texts and which he persuaded the British Government to forbid in 1829, and his campaign against polygamy, his attempts to secure the remarriage of widows, inter-caste marriage, Indian unity, friendship between Hindus and Mussulmans, Hindu education which he wished to model on the same scientific lines as Europe and for which he wrote in Bengali numerous text books on Geography, Astronomy, Geometry, Grammar, etc., the education of women based on the example of ancient India, liberty of thought and of the Press, legal reforms, political equality, etc." M. Rolland rightly says, "This man of gigantic personality, whose name to our shame is not inscribed in the Pantheon of Europe as well as of Asia, sank his ploughshare in the soil of India and sixty years of labour left her transformed. A great writer of Sanskrit, Bengali, Arabic, Persian and English, the father of modern Bengali prose; the author of celebrated hymns, poems, sermons, philosophic treatises and political and controversial writings of all kinds, he sowed his thoughts and his passion broadcast. And out of the earth of Bengal has come forth the harvest—a harvest of works and men.

"And from his inspiration (a fact of supreme importance) sprang the Tagores."

Miss Sophia Dobson Collet was a very young girl of ten or eleven years when she saw Raja Rammohun Roy in South Place Chapel, London. She was so deeply impressed by the magnetic personality of the great man who founded the Brahmo Samaj, that she followed the development of that monotheistic community throughout her life as well as undertook to write the life of Raja Rammohun Roy, which, unfortunately, she could not complete during her life time. She handed over all papers connected with this biography to the late Rev. F. Herbert Stead with a letter of request to finish the work in her behalf in which she said, "I am dying. I cannot finish my 'Life of Rammohun Roy'. But when I enter the Unseen I want to be able to tell Rammohun that his 'Life' will be finished. Will you finish it for me?" Miss Collet died on the 27th March, 1804. The 'Life' was published after her death in 1900, by Harold Collet from London. Other editions have been printed after that. The general plan and the documentation had been made and carried out by Miss Collet who spared no pains to make it as complete and perfect as one could when Indian sources could not be tapped easily, if at all.

What Raja Rammohun Roy meant to the development of modern Indian civilization can be best expressed in the words of Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda (as quoted by Sister Navedita). The Poet said, "Rammohun belongs to the lineage of India's great seers who age after age have appeared in the arena of our history with the message of the Eternal man." The Swamiji said in May 1898, at Nainital in the courre of a talk on Rammohun Roy that he had been taught three things by this teacher, acceptance of Vedanta, patriotism and the ideal of equal love for Hindus and Musalmans. In all these he (Swami Vivekanda) was inspired by Rammohun Roy. Rammohun Roy was from his boyhood an intensive enquirer into ultimate realities and truth. He tried to realise the fundamental nature of the creative force that was God, by reasoning as well as through direct communion and meditation. His knowledge of the Upanishadic speculation in this field was profound and faultless. He studied the theology of Islam, Christianity and Buddhism in order to get a clearer vision of Godhood. He learnt a dozen languages in order to study the different religions through their original source books as well as to go deeper into the problems of human life in the political, educational, legal and other social fields. His knowledge of constitutional and general law was so precise and extensive that many politicians got into touch with him in order to avoid faulty legislation. The Spanish Constitution which was declared at Cadiz in 1812 and published by the Philippine Company was dedicated to Raja Rammohun Roy, the *liberalismo, noble, sablo* and *vlrtuoso Brahmo* (the most liberal, noble, wise and virtuous Brahman). The Raja took a keen and lively interest in the political struggles carried on by the people of various countries. His advocacy of the Reform Bill, the French Revolution, the Portuguese struggle against autocratic rule and Catholic Emancipation drew the attention of many important political thinkers of Europe.

Raja Rammohun Roy understood fully well that man was a social animal and man's morality and religious practices should therefore go beyond the narrow limits of his individual existence. He found that the Hindu way of philosophical speculation and spiritual endeavour to establish communion with God were unequalled by anything that could be found in other religious communities. He therefore based his intellectual and spiritual endeavours mainly in Vedanta. But when he came to consider the

ethical life of man he found the teachings of Jesus Christ were a better guide in the ethical field. He also found that congregational worship was a stronger nation-building force than individual devotion and communion with the Deity. That is why he introduced a congregational from of public worship in the Brahmo Samaj. The Vedas, the Upanishads were to be used in place of the Bible and the songs sung should have an emotional appeal derived often from the devotional traditions of Indian devotees and mystics. The resemblance with Christian church service will be exclusively in outward form. Rammohun Roy saw that the Europeans were better educated, better organised politically and in trade and commerce and their ascendancy in the world was due to those controllable factors. He never believed in any racial superiority as is evidenced by his replies to the Select Committee of the House of Commons which asked him about his countrymen, "what capability of improvement do they process ?" Rammohun Roy's answer was, "They have the same capability of improvement as any other civilized people." In 1822, he wrote, "But should the Natives receive the same advantages of education the Europeans generally enjoy, and be brought up in the same notions of honour, they will I trust, be found, equally with Europeans, worthy of the confidence of their countrymen and respect of all men."

Before closing this narration of the life of the great scholar, social reformer and nation builder Raja Rammohun Roy one should include in the concluding passages some excerpts from his writings which highlight his outlook on different subjects connected with his life's work. The abolition of Suttee was no doubt effected by legislation which was carried out by Lord William Bentinck after he had long discussions with Raja Rammohun Roy and had studied the arguments put forward by the abolition of this evil practice. Raja Rammohun Roy made a statement in the *Abstract of the Arguments regarding the Burning af Widows considered as a Religious Rite* which he published in 1830, as a rejoinder to the manifesto of the 128 pundits. He called it "a clear and concise epitome for popular use of the points which had been scattered through many essays and tracts" and grouped his arguments under three heads. According to the Sacred Books of the Hindus, concremation was : (1) not obligatory but at most optinal; (2) not the most commendable but the least virtuous act a widow could perform; and (3) must be a voluntary ascending of the pile and

entering into the flames—a mode never practised in the conventional Suttee. The Raja closed his tract with the remark, "Thanks to Heaven, whose protecting arm has rescued our weaker sex from cruel murder" and "our character as a people" from international opprobrium.

Raja Rammohun Roy established the Brahmo Samaj which was a society practising the worship of the Upanishadic Brahman. The Trust Deed of the place of worship stated that the building was meant :

> "For the worship and adoration of the Eternal Unsearchable, and Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe but not under, or by any other name, designation or title, peculiary used for, and applied to, any particular Being, or Beings, by any man, or set of men, whatsoever.
> "And that no graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting, portrait or the likeness of anything, shall be admitted within the messuage, building, land, tenements, hereditaments, and premises; and that no sacrifice, offering, or oblation of any kind or thing, shall ever be permitted therein; and that no animal or living creature shall, within or on the said messuage, building, land, tenements, hereditaments and premises, be deprived of life, either for religious purposes or for food."

Raja Rammohun Roy was against offending the religious feelings of persons who were of other communities and enjoined toleration of all religions on his followers. The Trust Deed further said :

> "And that, in conducting the said worship or adoration, no object. animate or inanimate, that has been, or is, or shall hereafter become, or be recognized, as an object of worship, be any man, or set of men, shall be reviled, or slightingly or contemptuously spoken of, or alluded to, either in preaching, praying, or in the hymns, or other mode of worship that may be delivered or used in the said messuage or building.
> He also made it very clear how he desired bonds of unity to grow among all religious communities by stating, in the same Trust Deed, that the purpose of all preaching, discourse, prayer, etc. in the Brahmo Samaj shall be the 'promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue, and the strengthening the

bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds."

Raja Rammohun Roy was granted the title of Raja by the Moghul Emperor of Delhi, His Majesty, Ubaonunssur Moeenoodeen Ukbur Badshah as the Raja was appointed his Elchee (envoy) to the court of Great Britain and was therefore invested with a new dignity of position. The British Governor General of India, Lord William Bentinck, also accepted this investiture as within the right, of the Moghul Emperor of Delhi, when the Raja drew his Lordship's attention to this fact.

While the Raja was planning to go to Britain the people who were against him were also busy organizing the opposition to the reforms that the Raja sponsored. Some were even of the opinion that Rammohun should be assassinated and, for a while, armed guards were placed in his house under the command of one Mr. Martin. Rammohun Roy himself went about with a dagger and swordstick accompanied by Mr. Martin who carried a brace of pistols. At least one attempt was made to assassinate the Raja, which however proved, abortive.

Raja Rammohun Roy was a passionate believer in educating the people. In his zeal he was as willing to start schools and colleges himself as he was in rendering assistance to others who wanted to organize and run schools and colleges. In 1816, or even before that, Raja Rammohun Roy offered to give a piece of land for a school to Mr. Eustace Carey of the *Baptist Missionary Society.* Rammohum Roy was closely associated with the Calcutta School Book Society which was established in 1817 and he wrote a text book of Geography in Bengali. He also wrote a Bengali Grammar named Gaudia Vyakarana. He assisted Dr. Alexander Duff to set up his institution, though it was a Christian institution. His breadth of outlook was quite different from the narrowmindedness of his opponents who said they would have nothing to do with the Hindu College if the Raja's name was included among its sponsors. The idea that India should have English education with an emphasis on science subjects was particularly and strongly supported by Raja Rammohun Roy, His life was based on modern progressive ideas. He was the first Brahmin to cross the "black waters" of the sea and to break the rules of conduct imposed on Hindus. The impression he created in England moulded and modified British

opinion of Indians in a manner which proved valuable for Indians after his time. He went to Europe at a time when political reforms were sweeping over various countries. Slavery was abolished by law in the British Empire. The Factory Act was passed in those days too. The Railways were being built and modern institutions were taking shape everywhere. The Third Reform Bill was passed through all its stages in the Lower House before the end of March 1832. Everyone waited excitedly to see what the Lords did. Raja Rammohun Roy thought that "the welfare of England, nay of the world, depends" on the success of the Reform. The Raja had admired the material progress achieved by the Europeans even before he went to Europe. But he never thought that the Europeans were superior to the Indians in point of moral and spiritual outlook. As the Raja was a man inspired by great spiritual and moral urges and aspirations, he naturally wanted the Indians to preserve their own culture, although he thought Indian should build their life materially on science and by developing political and economic institutions of the European type.

Rammohun Roy's letter to Lord Amherst on Western education, as against Sanskrit education gives us a good idea of the way of thinking of the great Indian. We shall give some passages from this letter.

"The establishment of a new Sangscrit School in Calcutta evinces the laudable desire of Government to improve the Natives of India by Education—a blessing for which they must for ever be greatful; and every well-wisher of the human race must be desirous that the efforts made to promote it, should be guided by the most enlightened principles, so that the stream of intelligence may flow into the most useful channels."

"When this seminary of learning was proposed, we understood that the Government in England had ordered a considerable sum of money to be annually devoted to the instruction of its Indian Subjects. We were filled with sanguine hopes that this sum would be laid out in employing European Gentlemen of talents and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful Sciences, which the nations of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world. . . ."

"We now find that the Government are establishing a Sangscrit

school under Hindu pundits to impart such knowledge as is already current in India. This seminary (similar in character to those which existed in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon) can only be expected to load the minds of youth grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practicable use to the possessors or to society. The pupils will there acquire what was known two thousand years ago, with the addition of vain empty subtleties since produced by speculative men, such as is already commonly taught in all parts of India. . . ."

"From these considerations, as the sum set apart for the instruction of the Natives of India was intended by the Government in England, for the improvement of its Indian subjects, I beg leave to state, with due deference to your Lordship's exalted situation, that if the plan now adopted be followed, it will, completely defeat the object proposed, since no improvement can be expected from inducing young men to consume dozen of years of the most valuable period of their lives in acquiring the niceties of the Byakurun or Sangscrit Grammar. . . . "

"If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen, which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner, the Sangscrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British Legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry and anatomy, with other useful sciences which may be accomplished with the sum proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talents and learning educated in Europe, and providing a College furnished with the necessary books, instruments and other apparatus."

It has taken India a very long time to introduce a proper system of education for the improvement of her sons and daughters. It was partly achieved by the joint effort of the British and the Indians; but a great deal remained to be done. But the ideals which Raja Rammohun Roy set up no doubt changed the direction of all efforts to educate the people into useful channels. He concluded his letter to Lord Amherst by saying, "I conceive myself discharging a solemn duty which I owe to my countrymen and also

to that enlightened Sovereign and Legislature which have extended their benevolent cares to this distant land actuated by a desire to improve its inhabitants.

Rammohun Roy thus had the unique distinction of being a conservative who did his utmost to conserve and uphold the intellectual and spiritual heritage of India; as well as of being a pathfinder who boldly struck out into new fields of science and progress to make India one of the great and modern nations.

3

RAM MOHAN ROY : A STUDY

GANESH PRASAD*

The study of Raja Ram Mohan Roy is interesting and instructive, it will ever remain so. He was the sober, balanced and progressive leader of the first generation of the new urban middle class of India.

As such, he was the first representative of its patriotic passion, philosophy and outlook. This class was the harbinger of the Renaissance, modern nationalism and modern India. Its first leader was, therefore, the foundation-head of most of the basic and dominant characteristics of modern Indian life and thought. This makes him the Father of Modern India.

Ram Mohan hailed the birth of his class, the new urban middle class, in Bengal as "the most cheering indication", "a dawn of a new Era". In its emergence he saw the beginning of the age of struggle for individual freedom. "Whenever such an order of men has been created, freedom has followed in its train."[1] Prophetic words indeed ! And he himself initiated the historic struggle.

Though the Derozians had just preceded him in this respect, his cautious and rational efforts set the stage for the birth and growth of the great movement for liberation. He started a regular battle against medievalism, authoritarianism, tradition and machinations of the priestcraft. The battle is yet unfinished. On every issue of his day that involved the question of individual freedom, dignity

*Dr Ganesh Prasad is Reader, Department of Political Science, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

and well-being, Ram Mohan was at the forefront of the progressives. He was a petty-bourgeois libertarian, every inch. For him, as for the modernist middle class, individual was the centre of social thinking and activity. Religion, Law and Morality were to be for the individual. This humanistic approach marks him as the pioneer of modernity.

Over half a century before the birth of the Indian National Congress, he could anticipate the progressive international outlook of colonial nationalism. Ram Mohan fearlessly expressed his reactions to world events and unreservedly demonstrated his sympathies for the cause of the oppressed, struggling and progressive humanity. He sympathized with the lot of the Irish peasants and the cause of the British Reforms agitation. He frankly displayed his joy over the French Revolution (1830) and the establishment of constitutional government in Spain. At the Cape of Good Hope, he insisted, despite physical inconvenience, on boarding a French frigate in order to pay his homage to the French flag which symbolized for him "liberty, equality and fraternity".

He exceedingly grieved over the success of reaction in Naples and yet remained unshaken in his libertarian optimism. He wrote, "Enemies of liberty and friends of despotism have never been, and never will be, ultimately successful."[2] These reactions and expressions are very meaningful. Subjectively, they show his extraordinary instinctive foresight and patriotic sagacity. Objectively, they foreshadow the mighty world progressive front of the thirties of the present century.

Ram Mohan was, then, the precursor of generations of progressive patriots of the colonial world. He was perhaps the first colonial to tell them the true meaning of the historic principle of statecraft, namely, "enemy's enemy is our friend" in the context of the modern world.

His instinctive promptings and humanistic optimism were best echoed by the Trinity of Gandhi, Tagore and Nehru in the age of world polarization and crisis of civilization. The unshaken Faith in Man and the consistent anti-fascism of these three stalwarts were in line with the noble tradition of the Renaissance. In the thirties and forties, Jawaharlal Nehru repeatedly brought home to his countrymen that their battle for freedom was being fought in China, Abyssinia, Spain and Russia also. On March 28, 1939, Nehru wrote, "India's freedom will not be worth many days'

purchase if fascism and nazism dominate the world. Our own existence bound with the fate of freedom and democracy in the world."[3] And in his death-bed message Tagore uttered, "As I look around I see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilization strewn like a vast heap of futility. And yet I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man."[4] The whole being of Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence, revolted against the butchery that characterized the fascist wars.

It was in this humanistic atmosphere that the progressive patriots viewed their fight for national liberation as an inalienable part of the world anti-imperialist and anti-fascist struggle of the progressive humanity.

Ram Mohan's intuitive and undesigned reaction found expression in Nehru's rational and definite policy. The progressive and humanist outlook of Indian nationalism made it the guide and leader of colonial nationalism of the post-Versailles era. Such was the fruit of the great legacy of the Father of Modern India.

It was maintained during the post-independence period as well. In the new context it implied that the newly acquired freedom could be made secure and the nation's all-round progress could be possible only in a world free from colonialism, old or new. Under Nehru's stewardship India championed the cause of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and anti-racialism. This earned for her the gratitude of the struggling humanity of Afro-Asia and a place of pride and respect in the comity of Nations. These achievements were the outcome of the belief in the ultimate triumph of the libertarian humanity.

RATIONAL APPRECIATION

Ram Mohan evinced instinctive hatred of foreign rule and at the same time rational appreciation of Western contact. This is evidenced by his recollection. At the age of sixteen he had viewed the British rule in India "with a feeling of great aversion". Subsequently, association with Europeans and acquaintance with their laws and form of government made him realise that that rule would "surely" lead "to the amelioration of the native inhabitants".[5] Benefits of Western contact are found in his various writings. His hatred and appreciation were echoed by subsequent sober patriots. His modernist patriotism made him appreciate the progressive role of Britain in India. In different contexts and

languages, the nationalists generally shared his opinion, despite some exaggerations like Ranade's "Providential Theory" and Gandhi's "Satanic Civilization".

In cultural spheres, too, Ram Mohan showed the sober course to modern India. In order to break the cultural monopoly of the unscruplous priestcraft and to dispel ignorance of masses, this pioneer of Indian journalism patronized Indian literature. He himself translated some scriptures in Bengali and a few in Hindustani. The efforts was the beginning of the age of enlightenment and hence of libertarian struggle. This protagonist of Indian literatures was, however, not averse to acquisition of knowledge from foreign languages. Thirst for knowledge led him to learn Hebrew, Greek and Latin, besides, of course, English. He was a prominent leader of agitation for the introduction of and encouragement to English education. To him then indigenous literature was the vehicle for spreading knowledge among common folk and English literature, the door to enter the world of modern learning. The view was subscribed even by those luminaries of modern India who were otherwise chauvinistic in outlook. Anarchic iconoclasts apart, sober nation-builders have always upheld this line of thinking.

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS REFORMS

Nowhere is Ram Mohan's typically modernist outlook more manifest than in his purpose of initiating historic socio-religious reform movement. He wrote to James Silk Buckingham, "I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their *political interests*. The distinction of caste. . . has entirely deprived them of *patriotic feeling*, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and laws of purification has totally disqualified them from undertaking *any difficult enterprise*. It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion, *at least for the sake of their political advantage* and social comfort."[6] The here-and-now outlook of the Renaissance man is unmistakable. This differentiates him from medieval saints and reformers.

The outlook was after the heart of the new middle class that was just emerging in Bengal, the Italy of Indian Renaissance. Here religious purity and spiritual uplift were secondary; materialistic progress and patriotic feelings were primary. This outlook makes

the progress towards social modernism of a middle class with whom discussion had become a mania.

The spirit of rationalistic approach in socio-religious sphere that Ram Mohan had instilled in his followers led them onwards in modernist direction. "To Ram Mohan Roy the *Veda* was true, because it was divine; to his followers it was divine, because it was true."[7] The patronage of Devendra Nath Tagore and the missionary zeal of Keshub Chandra Sen and Shiv Nath Shastri enabled the Samaj rapid progress. It, however, was and remained an urban creed; its influence in rural areas was almost negligible.

The libertarian atmosphere that the Samaj generated in socio-religious life had its impact in political and cultural spheres. The literati and nationalists of the early generations of modern Bengal were mostly influenced by and associated with the socio-religious activities of the Brahmos. The influence of the Brahmo household on Tagore needs no elaboration. The character of political struggle and thought bear the imprint of the character of the first socio-religious movement of modern India. This makes the study of Ram Mohan significant.

Notes and Reference

1. *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance*, Jadavpur, 1958, p. 14.
2. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, *The English Works*, Calcutta, 1947, Part IV, p. 127.
3. J.L. Nehru, *The Unity of India*, p. 149.
4. *The Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, September 1941, p. LIV.
5. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, *The English Works*, Calcutta, 1947, Part III, pp. 81-5.
6 Raja Ram Mohan Roy, *Ibid.*, Part IV, pp. 95-6.
7. F. Max Muller, *Collected Works* (*Biographical Essays*), London, 1904, Vol. II, p. 44.

4

RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY

P.C. GUPTA*

The gradual strengthening of the British hold, after. The decline of Maharatta during the 1820s synchronised with the birth and growth of the Indian Renaissance which was the synthesis of Hindu Tradition and the Western spirit of enquiry. It underlined the universalism of the Upanishads, the orientation of education along Western lines, the demand for civil liberty, the cry for nationalism and humanism, the consequent struggle for Swaraj, Sarvodaya, Swadeshi and Secularism, the craving for constitutionalism, the zeal for the minimization of violence and the overall enthusiasm for social and religious reforms.

The Indian and European scholars made available to educated Indians the great works of Sanskrit literature, simultaneously re-examining and questioning the validity of the prevalent social and political traditions and customs. Bengal played the leading role in this movement, for Calcutta was the centre of British rule in India, and the first schools, colleges and newspapers were established there. That brought tremendous political awakening among the people of Bengal, and they led the movement for social aud political reform and for the revival of reformed, but militant, Hinduism of the Upanishads.

Ram Mohun is acknowledged as the Father of the Hindu reformation of the 19th century. He reinterpreted the Hindu

* Deputy Registrar, University of Delhi, Delhi.

scriptures, including the Vedas, the Vedantas, the Tantras, the Puranas, the Smriti, and the Bhagvad Gita. He wrote treatises on various Hindu scriptures and his refreshing commentories on Isopanishad, Kothopanishad, Kenopanishad and Mandukopanishad indicate that he was essentially a Vedic Hindu and a philosophic modernist. He also wrote treatises on The Defence of Hindu Theism (1817), The Divine Worship (1827) and The Universal Religion (1828).

He was founder of the Atmiya Sabha (1816) and the Vedanta College (1825) to revive peoples' interest in the Vedas and the other Hindu sastras, to preach the gospel of One True God, he founded the Brahmo Samaj on August 20, 1818. The Brahmo Samaj was "based on a synthesis of stern monotheism, intellectual rationalism, the monism of the Upanishads and the religious devoutness of Christianity". It acted against social stagnation and was a deeply individualistic protest, signifying the rise of individual reason against the degrading and barbarising customs. It reflected the advaita philosophy which rejects idolatory, caste and superstitious rites.

The Trust Deed of the Brahmo Samaj made on January 18, 1830, proclaimed its objectives thus :

> The worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable, and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe, but not under or by any other name or title peculiarly used for and applied to any particular Being and Beings by any men or set of men whatsoever, and that no graven, statue or sculpture, carving painting, picture, portrait, or the likeness or anything shall be admitted. . .and that no sacrifice, offering or abolition of any kind or thing shall even be permitted therein and that no animal or living creature shall. . .be deprived of life either for religious purposes or for good. . .and that in conducting the said worship and adoration no object, animate or inanimate, that has been or is or shall hereafter become or be recognized as an object of worship by any man or set of men shall be reviled or slightingly or contemptously spoken of or alluded to either in preaching, praying or in the hymns or other mode of worship. . .that no sermon be delivered, made or used in such worship but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver

of the Universe, to the promotion of charity, morality, pity, benevolence, virtue and strengthening of the bound of union between men of all religious persuations and creeds.

With the authority of Kathopanishad of the Yajurveda, he rejected polytheism and asked the people to treat this practice with utmost contempt and disdain. Men of insufficient understanding alone assert the existence of the duality of Gods and Goddesses and prescribe the respective modes of their worship. Instead, he championed the cause of unitarian worship, i.e., worship of One True God, underlining the essential notes of monotheism.

Ram Mohun proclaimed that "the real spirit of the Hindu scriptures is the declaration of the unity of God". The Vedanta, which signifies the resolution of all the vedas, the Puranas and the Tantra, inculcate, invariably, the unity of God who is the "Supreme Existence". He thought that this true and wise Being, though formless incomprehensible, indefinable, indescribable, uncreated and unknown, is Omnipotent and Omnipresent, and that his designs are indiscriminately beneficial to all. He is the sole author, supporter and ruler of the universe and he accords mercy and salvation without waiting for the offer of innocent blood. To quote Ram Mohun :

> The Veda begins and concludes with the three peculiar and mysterious epithets of God, vig. first OM; second TAT; third, SAT. The first of these signifies That Being which preserves, destroys and creates'. The second implies, 'That only Being which is neither male nor female. The third announces, 'The True Being'. 'These collective terms simply affirm that *One unknown True Being is the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the Universe.*

Subscribing to the traditional view that the worship of One true God is the chief duty of kind and the sole cause of eternal beatitude, Ram Mohun asked his countrymen to embrace the rational worship of God as enjoined by the Vedas and confirmed by the dictates of the common sense. He wanted them to contemplate the attributes of the Supreme Being so that they gain a knowledge of God, act according to their conscience, which is the spark of God, whose divinity we all equally share and which

should make us friendly and compassionate towards our fellow creatures.

Ram Mohun candidly voiced against the obstinate adherence of his countrymen especially Hindus, to their fatal, pagan, purile and superstitious system of idolatory. He cautioned them that the Vedas, the Puranas, and the Tantras recommend idol worship only for these who, owing to their lack of understanding are incompetent to worship the invisible God. He strove to convince them that idolatory destroys the natural texture of society, and prescribes crimes of the most henious nature. Worshippers of image, more-over, present the extremity of their ignorance by simultaneously ascribing to their so-called Gods and Goddesses, the opposite natures of human and supper human beings. He desired them to get rid of their misconceived notions and to reacquaint themselves with their scriptures which prohibit idolatory and enjoin the worship of One True God.

SOCIO ECONOMIC IDEAS

Ram Mohun was the father of the movement for religious and social reforms and worked against superstitious beliefs and diabolic practices, widely prevalent in the Hindu society. He worked for the allround welfare and upliftment of the down-trodden and ignorant masses of India. The role of individual social reforms in this direction of social change was not enough and therefore to supplement their effort he advocated state legislation for social and religious reforms and for economic and educational reconstruction.

He was opposed to the prevailing caste system which had resulted in the closed society. With the zeal of a missionary, he worked for the removal of caste restrictions and encouraged inter-caste marriages. He was in favour of monogamy which he thought was in consonance with the universally acknowledged institution of monogamy. He declared the institution of polygamy as unnatural, irrational and in-jourious, despite that he himself was married three times at the age 8, 9 and 17. The only justification he gave for his three marriages was that he was not a willing party to them and that he had accepted child marriage and polygamy only out of sheer regard for his father.

The Rajputs in the neighbourhood of the Doab were accustomed to destroy their infant daughters at the feet of Goddess

to invoke her mercy and favours. Ram Mohun declared this practice as nothing but a crime and a sin, and was of the view that such persons must be considered as guilty of child murder.

Crusader Against Suttee

Suttee was widely prevalent in some parts of India, especially in Bengal. It used to be performed in the form either of concremation or post-cremation. In concremation, the practice was to bind down the widow along with corpse of her husband and heap over her such a quantity of wood that she would not rise. Post-cremation, on the other hand, was performed in case the widow was away from her husband at the time of his death. Then, she used to be burnt along with some relic of her deceased husband. In either case, at the time of setting fire to the pile, she was to be pressed down with large bamboos to avoid the possibility of her running away from the flames.

Concremation and postcremation resulted either in suicide or murder of the widow, as no widow ever voluntarily ascended on and entered into flames in the fulfillment of the rite. And, the violation of the rite of voluntarily ascending upon and entering into the flames had resulted in female suicide and murder, implicating in the guilt where of all those who assisted in its perpetration.

The advocates of suttee had preached that women are "by nature of inferior understanding, without resolution, unworthy of trust, subject to passions, and void of virtuous knowledge". Consequently, the Hindu scriptures were said to require the widow to live the life of an ascetic, denying her all worldly pleasures and prohibiting her from marrying again after the demise of her husband. It was argued that the widow would find it extremely difficult to live as an ascetic and there would in that case be the possibility of her indulging in such acts as may bring disgrace upon relations of her parents and of her deceased husband. The women for this reason were prepared from their early life for performing sutte on the demise of their husbands. Thus instructed, many women on the death of their husbands became desirous of accompanying their husbands to heaven. And, to remove every chance of their trying to escape from the blazing fire there developed the usage of tying them down to the pile of their deceased husbands.

Ram Mohun fought against the prevailing institution of suttee and it was due mainly to his effort that in 1829 Lord William Bentinck abolished this institution by law. Ram Mohun was of the considered view that suttee both as concremation or postcremation of widow resulted in female suicide or murder, with a view to future heavenly reward.

His deep study of the Hindu scriptures, especially the Isopanishad, the Kathopanishad, the Kenopanishad, the Mankduopanishad, the other Upanishads of the Vedas, the Vedanta, the Purana, the Smriti and the Bhagvad Gita, convinced him that suttee was expressly forbidden by the Hindu religion as the most contemptible and sinful act. He discovered that the sastras, which commend that a wife should live under the control of her husband during his life, rather direct that on his death, she should life as an ascetic under the authority of her husband's relations or else under that of parental relations.

Even Manu, who is universally acknowledge as better acquainted than any other law-giver; with the spirit of the Veda, has not only expressly prohibited both female murder and suicide with a view to future heavenly reward, but has also directed that after the death of her husband, the widow shall pass her life as an ascetic, which is ordained as the most pious conduct for the widow to follow.

Ram Mohun, on an analysis of the actual manifestations of the nature of both man and woman, came to the conclusion that the faculties that were attributed to woman by the advocates of suttee were not planted in their constitution by nature. The conduct of women had rather proved that they were endowed with the same faculties which their menfolk had claimed. Wowen were rather denied by men themselves, and not by nature of their excellent merits, deliberately kept void of education, looked down upon as contemptible and mischievious creatures, treated as slaves of the household and subjected to mental miseries and even physical cruelties. Thus treated, they deserved compassion and not concremation or postcremation. Ram Mohun told his abveries : What I lament is, that, seeing the women thus dependent and exposed to every misery, you feel for them no compassion, that might exempt them from being tied down and burnt to death".

It was the constant endeavour of Ram Mohun and his followers not only to dissuade widows from performing suttee, but also to

persuade them either to remarry or to live as ascetics. He became the most vocal exponent of widow-re-marriage.

Ram Mohun also fought against the denial of property rights to women. He was of the view that it was woman's total economic dependence on men which was the main cause of her uncomfortable and uncertain life. He gave equal share to mother with sons, and ¼ share to daughters so that they are not wholly economically dependent on their family relations and constantly suffer cruelties at their hands.

POLITICAL IDEAS

Though not a politician, Ram Mohun was a keen student of politics. He was thorough with the political institutions and the politics of India as well as of Europe. He was generally in favour of the Western type of Parliamentary democracy which, he thought ensures peoples' greatest and largest participation in their governance. The true purpose of State and its government was described by him as LOKSHREYA, i.e., good of the people, the concept which subsequently developed at the hands of Gandhi into that of Sarvodaya, i.e., the greatest good of all in all fields of human activity. His positive preference was for good government and in preferring good government to self-government he was a forerunner of Ranade, and Gokhale. As he put it, he could wait till 1873, for the British rulers to leave India, but he wanted them to ensure government at once.

He was eager that both the British rulers and the people of India should see their faults and sincerely seek to redress them. This should be possible only if there existed the closest relationship and understanding between the rulers and the ruled. And, so this end, he started his Bengali viewspaper Sambad Cowmoody and the Persian viewspaper Mirat-ul-Akhbar and also started a potilical organisation in 1830, which later on came to be known as the Zamindari Association, which was in some way a forerunner of the Indian National Congress, which in its turn, was founded in 1885.

He asked for the codification and uniformity of civil and criminal laws and desired that the Indian courts should interpret the sastras, the vedas and the laws according to the voice of reason. In that he was a forerunner of Justice Ranade. He also believed that justice should be administered not exclusively by the British

judges but through the participation of the native Indian jury. The judiciary must, moreover, be impartial and fully independent both of the legislature and the executive.

Dicey's The Law of the Constitution made Ram Mohun a champion of the rule of law. He proclaimed that :

(a) Men are subject to laws, and not to executive arbitrariness;
(b) All men are equal before law, irrespective of their status, and are subject to and protected by the same laws; and
(c) The Constitution and laws should be interpreted by duly qualified and authorised judges alone.

Ram Mohun championed the cause of peoples' rights and liberties. He had read the political writings of John Locke, which made him ask for the following rights for his countrymen :

(1) Right to life, liberty and property for men and women;
(2) Right to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion;
(3) Right to the freedom of thought, speech and expression;
(4) Right to the freedom of press;
(5) Right to the freedom to form associations, including political parties; and
(6) Right to warn, disobey and resist the government in a peaceful and constitutional manner.

Most of these rights are now contained in several Articles of the Constitution of India, especially under Articles 19, 21, 25 and 31. Insofar as the struggle for ensuring freedom of pr ss to the people of India is concerned, it may be said to his credit that he was the first Indian in modern times to have started viewspapers in Bengali and Persian to foster mutual understanding between the rulers and the ruled, and to create an effective public opinion against the misdeeds of both the society and the state. He fought for the removal of restrictions which the Government had imposed on the freedom of press in India. His main argument being that freedom of press helped preventing revolution, as though the press people got an opportunity to ventilate their grievances. It was some

two years after his death that Lord Willam Bentinck removed these restrictions in 1835.

His memorials to the Supreme Court of Judicature at Fort Williams and to the King-in-Council highlight the restriction imposed by the Rule and Ordinance passed by the Governor-General-in-Council regarding the publication of periodical works. He pointed out that the imposition of these restrictions would inevitably result in :

(1) A complete stop on the diffusion of knowledge and the consequent mental improvement;
(2) Prevention of the natives, who are better versed in the laws and customs of the British nation from communicating to their fellow subjects a knowledge of the admirable system of government established by the British and the peculiar excellence of the means they have adopted for the strict and impartial administration of justice;
(3) Preclusion of the natives from making the government readily acquainted with the errors and injustices that may be committed by its executive officers in the various parts of this extensive country;
(4) Preclusion of the native from communicating frankly and honestly to their Gracious Sovereign in England and his council, the real condition of His Majesty's faithful subjects in this distant part of his dominions the treatment they experience from the local government; and
(5) Denial to the natives of the opportunity to represent their felt grievances to the government and to seek their due redress so that there may never be an occasion for revolution or insurrection against the government.

Ram Mohun and his co-memorialists observed in their Memorial to Sir Francis Magnaghten, the sole acting Judge of the Supreme Court of Judicature at Fort William in Bengal :

> Your Memorialists are persuaded that the British Government is not disposed to adopt the political maxim so often acted upon by Asiatic Princess that the more a people are kept in darkness, their rulers will derive the greater advantages from them; since by reference to History, it is found that this was put

> shortsighted policy which did not ultimately answer the purpose of its authors. On the contrary, it rather proved disadvantageous to them; for we find that as often as an ignorant people, when an opportunity offered, have revolted against their Rulers, all sorts of barbarous excesses and cruelties have been the consequences; whereas a people naturally disposed to peace and ease, when placed under a good Government, must become the more attached to it in proportion as they are attached to it as they become enlightened and the great body of the people are taught to appreciate the value of the blessing they enjoy under its rule.

As the Father of Modern Indian Liberal, Tradition, Ram Mohun not only preferred the ideal of good government to that of self-government, but also adopted the moderate politics of "petition and prayer" for the redress of Indians' grievances. The whole moderate or liberal tradition in Indian Politics is predominated by the politics of petition and prayer through which Indian leadership sought constitutional, social and political reforms, starting with Ram Mohun and subsequently adopted by Naoroji, Ranade and Gokhale.

Ram Mohun Roy was a genius. "He was a prophet of universalism; a keen and ardent champion of liberty in all its phases and a political agitator for the freedom of the press and the right of the tenants. . .He was also a great scholar of comparative religions and was the founder of Bengali prose literature and Bengali journalism."

5

GLIMPSES OF THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF RAMMOHUN

ARUN KUMAR ROY CHAUDHURI*

"To The Public Rammohun Roy is best known as a reiligous and social reformer. To many he is also known as a literateur and educationist. But he is not so well-known as a political reformer and agitator."[1] Ramananda Chatterjee, the doyen of Indian journalists, begins his "brief account" of Rammohun's political ideas with this pertinent observation. Dr. Biman Behari Majumder shares almost the same opinion, for he observes that Rammohun's social and religious reforms were "of such absorbing interest" that controversy has raged round those ideas to the exclusion of discussion on his fruitful political thought.[2] Rammohun Roy was, after all, mainly a religious and social reformer. But though he was not primarily concerned with politics and founded no political association, modern Indian political thought begins with Rammohun. In addition to his writings the conversation he had with various personalities at different times throw much light on his political ideas. But unfortunately, these conversations have not always been recorded. Thus, in England, Rammohun had an interview with Roscoe at the latter's house in Lodge Lane. The "gentility of Liverpool", we are told, thronged there to have a

*The author is a Lecturer in Political Science at Rampurhat College, West Bengal.

view of Rammohun and many and eager were the enquiries about the stranger's political and religious opinions". After recovering from the "effects of interview" we are further told Rammohun got into a "very interesting and animated discussion"[3] with some of them. Again, Rammohun met Robert Owne, the "Utopian Socialist" at a dinner party given by Dr. Arnot. Recorder Hill informs us that there was a conversation between the two great men and Owen tried to convert Rammohun to his opinion, but failed in the attempt.[4] In this case also no account has been found of this interesting conversation. Thus one concurs with the editors of Collet's biography of Rammohun that it is unfortunate that none of his friends . . . in England ever made any attempt to record systematically the development of Rammohun's political and social thought during the latter's last days."[5]

However, from the available and extent material it is definitely possible to form a viev, of Rammohun's political ideas. The purpose of this paper is to highlight some of his ideas and to make a tentative attempt to trace the sources from which Rammohun might have derived these ideas.

II

ANTI-MONARCHISM

Dr. Brajendranath Seal has stressed Bacon's influence on Rammohun.[6] Fitzclarence (in 1817) found Rammohun quoting Bacon and Locke "on all occasions". And it is true that Rammohun's rationalist outlook was as much shaped by the Mutaralis (the Muslim rationalists) as by Bacon. But the latter's politics had hardly any influence on Rammohun. For, as has been well observed by a historian of political thought, "in Science Bacon looked, to the future, but in Political Science he had no insight into the newer current that were moving towards the direction of liberty."[7] Thus Bacon favoured a strong monarchy and was a supporter of war and expansion. Rammohun, on the other hand, was a strong anti-monarchist and a pacifist. In fact, if he was not a republican like Tom Paine, in his indictment of absolute monarchy he was very much like the latter.

Even in Tuhaft-ul-muhauddin (1804), his earliest tract written in Persian, we find traces of anti-monarchistic idea. In Tuhaft, Rammohun boldly and unambiguously declares that there can be no comparison between God and King. For in comparison with God who is omnipotent, man's knowledge is imperfect. Again, he is lible to error. Finally, the King is, after all, a man. But his views in this respect are most clearly stated in his article on the form and purposes of government which was published in his Persian Weekly Mirat-Ul-Akhbar (April 1822) and was later translated in Buckingham's "Calcutta Journal."[8]

In this article he makes a three-fold classification of Government. Regarding the rule of monarch with unlimited power he observes very strongly : "How is it possible that the lives and properties of hundreds and thousands of the sons of Adam should be made dependent on the will of one man and ready to be sacrificed to the caprice of a single individual"? For as he very pertinently says : the "best of men" are not always "free from passion and immoderate desires". And who does not know that these passions and immoderate desires very often overcome "the dictates of reason ? Again, referring to these "best of men", he goes on, they are not "exempted from those errors and vices which belong to human nature". Thus, absolute monarchy cannot be accepted. In this form of Government, observes Rammohun, "from the wrath or mistake of a single individual may proceed the destruction of an extensive country and ruin of a great nation." Adoption of absolute monarchy, in fact, is, to him bringing upon men "the nature and condition of brute animals". Incidentally, in the very same article, he declares that "*to form friendly relations with neighbouring states* and *resist aggressions of nations*" are the *two important purposes of Government*. In this also he differs from Bacon.

The influence of French Revolution may perhaps be traced in Rammohun's critique of absolute monarchy and aristocracy. As has been very aptly observed by one of his modern biographers : The French Revolution of 1789 had quickened men's minds with strange dreams of a new human destiny not only on the banks of the Seine alone, but on the banks of the Hooghly as well."[9] And as we learn from John Digby, Rammohun's employer and friend, the latter became keenly interested in the political developments of Europe during the first decade of the last century. "He was . . . in the constant habit of reading the English newspapers, of which the

Continental Politics chiefly interested him."[10] But, Rammohun, we submit, was not exactly a republican, he was rather a supporter of constitutional monarchy.

PREFERENCE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY

Rammohun presents the case for constitutional monarchy in this way : "As it is absolutely necessary to have some form of Government, the executive power should be committed to a single individual on condition that he do (sic) not infringe law established by the nation."[11]

This has similarity, with the views expressed in the French Cahiers (statements of grievances and suggestions of reforms prepared in the local election districts) of the spring of 1789. As a historian of political thought says in France at that time "all classes were agreed that a new political system must be set up . . . The main features of the system of Government which they desired to establish were generally agreed upon : *The King should remain, but his legislative powers should be shared by the nation as represented in a general assembly.*"[12] The close resemblance between the two views is obvious. In this connection we may also refer to the ideas of the French moderates in post-Restoration France (1815). It has been said of these French moderates that, in contradistinction to the ultraroyalists, they were pledged to defend the Revolution and continue it without the revolutionary spirit. They accepted monarchy imposed upon them and took their stand by Charte Constitutionalla of Louis (1814), which gave the French public the *right to control over the Government—a right they had not possessed* under the Empire. One feels that Rammohun, was to a certain extent, influenced by these events and ideas. For, he supports the cause of constitutional monarchy by saying, "*in this case the subjects have the power of watching the Proceeding of the executive government which is thus obliged to court the good will of its subjects.*"[13]

That Rammohun retained his faith in constitutional monarchy is borne out by the reports of his conversations with Victor Jacquemont. The interview took place on 21st June 1829 and Jacquemont recorded it in his Journal on June 25 of the same year. As the Frenchman writes : Rammohun paid "rather exaggerated compliments" to the "more or less constitutional monarchies of England and France." A Republican by conviction Jacquemont wished, as

he himself says, to reply by setting forth the advantages of a democratic republic and spoke about the U.S.A. which he had visited : As Jacquemont's description of America is of historical interest today, and as it has not been so far used by any writer we quote it in extenso. In America, Jacquemont says : . . . "Daily wages for even the most mechanical labour is sufficient to procure for those who have only their hand to live by, ample nourishment, good clothes and satisfactory housing . . . Every body works and works for himself, no idlers to lead useless lives on the riches acquired by the toil of others . . . the loaf is almost always for him who bakes it."[14] Rammohun's heart "warmed up" at this picture and he expressed his "admiration for it, Jacquemont informs us. But perhaps Jecquemont could not convert him into a republican. For James Sutherland wrote from personal knowledge in 1834 that 'Rammohun was not a republican in Politics at least so far as England was concerned." He "admired republicanism in the abstract" and thought that "in America it worked well."[15]

In fact, in contemporary Europe, the Republican idea was at discount (anti-Jacobin reaction) and the "chief problem of those who speculated on the theory of constitutional government was to find a safe and useful niche for the monarch. And until after 1848 the Theorists were mainly concerned with the effort to reconcile the functions of a representative assembly with that of a hereditary monarch."[16] And in England Tom Paine's (the apostle of Republicanism) effigy was burnt by Durham miners.[17]

In this respect, Rammohun's views may also rather be compared to those of Voltaire (1694-1778). For the latter preferred a "benevolent and enlightened monarch and considered the republican form of Government only the "most tolerable", and the kings could not be trusted to govern well. Though he was the most powerful critic of his period, Voltaire, "had no intention to prepare men for a revolution", and "expected reforms to be carried out by the rulers themselves".[18] Similar was the attitude of Rammohun.

Liberty : The French Declaration of the Rights of man and citizen [first adopted on Aug. 26, 1789] laid it down that :

> Men are from birth free and equal in rights and the end of every political association is the maintenance of "natural and imprescriptible rights of man". And these were "Liberty, Property, Security and resistance to oppression." The ideas of

Rousseau, Montesquieu etc. had really permeated the French spirit. This insistence on natural rights was not however liked by many contemporary British philosophers. Thus to Bentham, the whole conception of Natural rights was "simple nonsense". To Burke the French Declaration was a "digest of anarchy". Rammohun, on the other hand, was a great lover of liberty. He has been called the 'apostle of personal freedom'. Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul freedom not of action only but of thought", says his friend Dr. Adam. Rammohun's passion for liberty is well expressed in the letter he wrote to the editor of Calcutta Journal [Aug. 11, 1821] on receiving the "unhappy news" that in Italy the Neapolitans had been crushed back into servitude by the Austrian troops. From the late unhappy news he writes to silk Buckingham, "I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations . . ." and finally added, "Enemies of liberty and friends of despotism have never been and never will be ultimately successful." Incidentally, we may point out the resemblance of Montesquieu's conception of political liberty with that of Rammohun. To Montesquieu [1689-1775] political liberty was the opposite to despotic rule.

Thus when Rammohun identified the "enemies of liberty" with the "friends of despotism" one hears an echo of Montesquieu. Rammohun thought that Indians were "secured in the enjoyment of the same civil and religious privileges" that every Briton was entitled to in England." His complaint against the Muslim rule was that, during that period the property of the "Natives of Bengal" was often plundered, their religion insulted and their blood wan only shed." Thus one is perhaps justified in concluding that by civil liberty Rammohun understood the right to life, the right to personal liberty, the right to property, freedom of opinion, and freedom of religious worship, Rammohun gives a special emphasis on freedom of the press or as he would call it the "Liberty of Publication, "A Government conscious of rectitude of intention, cannot be afraid of public scrutiny by means of a Press,"[22] he says. Again, "Every good Ruler, who is convinced of the imperfections of Human nature must be conscious of the great liability to error in managing the affairs of a vast empire," he observes and adds, "the

unrestrained liberty of publication is the only effectual means by which individuals may bring to the Ruler's notice "whatever may require his interference."[23]

In this respect Rammohun's efforts in India may be compared to those of Voltaire in France and Milton in England. The oppressive censorship of religious and political opinion made freedom of publication a vital issue in France in Voltaire's time. And as Sabine points out "no publicist laboured so tireless as Voltaire"[24] in this matter.

Separation of Powers

The theory of separation of powers has lost much of the "sacrosanct character"[25] which it once possessed in the public mind. While accepting the principle "in its essence", modern writers like Ernest Barker, interpret it in a different way ["distinction of the modes of action."[26]] But when Montesquieu expounded it in his "Spirit of Laws" and Blackstone and others supported it, they attached much more significance to the doctrine. It was to them the greatest safeguard of individual liberty. Thus, Montesquieu wrote that in every Government "there are three sorts of Powers" . . . "there is no liberty if the Power of judging be not separated from legislative the life and liberty of the subject would be exposed to arbitrary control; for the judge would then be legislator."[27] The French Revolutionaries were inspired by this Montesquean doctrine of separation of powers and the French Declaration of Rights of 1789 laid it down that "a society in which separation of powers is not fixed has no constitution."

Rammohun shows his acquaintance with this Montesquean doctrine when he objects against the Press regulation by saying that "Government is anxious to combine the legislative and Judicial Power which is destructive of all civil liberty."[28] Rammohun however never made full-scale discussion on the question of separation of powers. We must remember that he was no systematic political philosopher but only a pamphleteer and a political agitator. In any case, his preference for some sort of separation of governmental powers can be traced in his later writings also. Thus in "questions and answers on Judicial system in India" we find him expressing the opinion that the union of the offices of revenue commissioners and curcuit judges is quite incompatible and injurious."[29] In an earlier pamphlet Rammohun essayed an interpretation

of Indian history in terms of the theory of separation of powers. In his opinion absolute form of government with its attendant tyranny prevailed in India, only when the Brahmins [the traditional legislators] accepted office under the Kshatriyas [The executives], thus making an unhealthy union of legislative and executive powers in the hands of the second tribe."[30] In addition to these, Rammohun seems to have imbibed many other ideas of French Revolution : equality before law, passion for codification of laws and simplication of court procedure and conception of education as some sort of panacea of all social evils. These ideas were in the air and any individual of sensitive and liberal disposition could not possibly help being not inspired by them. So of these ideas, e.g., codification of laws and omnipotence of education were popularised in England by Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. But as Bertrand Russel[31] points out, Bentham derived his faith in education from the doctrines of French Revolutionary philosophers like Helvetius [1715-1771], who believed that only a *perfect education was needed to make men perfect*. Rammohun, to some extent, shared this belief. Many other Bengali thinkers followed him in this particular respect (*Tarachand Chakraborty and Aukshoy Kumar Datta*, to name only two.)

III

But the French Revolution had another aspect—the aspect of Nationalism. Hayes observes : "the French Revolution inculcated the doctrine that all citizens owed their first and paramount loyalty to the national state." And the Revolution sought, he continues, to infuse the citizens with an "ardent national enthusiasm" in various ways : through introduction of National Flag, National Anthem, National holidays, etc. As a result, after the Revolution Nationalism "was too omnipresent in the continental atmosphere to be disregard by such intellectual and progressive persons as the leading liberals."[32] For the various peoples of Europe, this period [particularly 1815-1850], was really, a period of aspiration. "The aspiration of the people", says Ketelby, "were mainly two-fold : democratic and nationalist" : "men dreamed dreams of political freedom and saw visions of national union and independence."[33] In countries like England, France, Spain etc., where national unity and independence had already been achieved the struggles were directed to such

adjuncts of democracy as majority Government, representative Parliament, extended suffrage, free Press. But in countries like Italy [where a people was politically divided, though recially one] popular aspiration turned towards union or independence. It is remarkable that Rammohun not only kept himself abreast of these developments in Europe but actually expressed his sympathy and concern for most of them. His reactions to the happenings in Italy we have noted; the "unhappy" news from Naples shocked him so much that he cancelled his appointment with the editors of "Calcutta Journal". Similarly, he celebrated the news of the liberation of Spanish Colonies of America by illumination. When after the Revolution of 1830 in France the divine right of kings was actually substituted by "divine right of nations" Rammohun was elated. The Revolution was to him "an evidence of the glorious triumph of right over might". (We cannot, however, help remembering that about one year ago he had paid compliments to the constitutional monarchy in France.) During his sojourn in England, that country was very much agitated over the Reform Bill of 1831, the aim of which was extension of suffrage. Rammohun was involved in it in a strange way. As Miss, Collet says, "about this time Rammohun's chief pre-occupation was political." The struggle between reformers and anti-reformers was to him struggle between "liberty and tyranny throughout the world." Thus, Ramananda Chatterjee is right in asserting that Rammohun had "deep sympathy" for all "political movements all over the world that had for their object the advance of popular freedom."[34]

IV

But Rammohum who was so much sensitive to the democratic and nationalist aspirations of various peoples of contemporary Europe also questioned (with reference to his own country) whether the love of National independence was not a chimera ?" "Conquest is very rarely an evil when the conquering peoples are more civilised than the conquered," he told Jacquemont in 1829.[35] In 1823, Rammohun had written : "we frequently offer our humble thanks to God, for the blessing of the British rule in India and sincerely pray that it may continue its *beneficient operations for centuries to come*."[36] Thus though a liberal, and a supporter of nationalist aspiration in contemporary Europe, in respect to India he was

guided by pragmatic considerations[37] to support British rule in India, his native land. This pragmatic approach is also evident from a letter that he wrote to the "Reformer" edited by P.K. Tagore from England. In the said letter Rammohun confessed that he was aware of the "evils of political subjugation and dependence on foreign peopte". Yet reflecting on the "*advantages which we have derived*" from British rule, he suggested that Indians should be "reconciled to the present state of things".

In his last testament, Rammohun supported European settlement in India and hoped that it "would operate to continue the connection between Great Britain and India on a solid and permanent footing", provided of course India was governed in a liberal manner, by means of Parliamentary superintendence".[38]

It is interesting to compare Rammohun's views on European settlement with the views expressed in a contemporary journal on the same subject. Thus, the famous "India Gazette" supported such "colonisation" more than a decade before Rammohun wrote on the same subject and observed that such settlement might ultimately mean "dissolution of the connection between England and this country." But that, in its opinion, was no reason why such settlement should be prevented. It observed prophetically : "*the separation of India from Great Britain cannot. . .be prevented. It must come sooner or later*". . . .[39] After twelve years, Rammohun writing on the same subject observed : "Canada is a standing proof that an anxiety to effect a separation from a mother country is not the natural wish of the people even tolerably well-ruled. The mixed community of India. . .So long as they are treated liberally, and governed in an enlightened manner will feel no disposition to cut off its connection with England."[40]

Thus, we see that the consideration of the "advantages" or the "beneficent operations" of British rule and the prospect of a liberal and enlightened administration prompted Rammohun to support his rule in India. He had expressed himself more fully on this point to Jacquemont in 1829, when he had observed : "the goal of society is to secure the happiness of the greatest possible number, and when left to itself a nation cannot attain this object. . . .it is better that it should be guided. . . . .*even by the authority of a conquering people*."[41] Thus, interestingly enough, he gave a twist to the Benthamite doctrine of the greatest good of the greatest number which led him to such length as Bentham himself perhaps could not

imagine, i.e., support of foreign conquest if it contributes to short-term "benefits". For many years to come the attitude of our Indian leaders was conditioned by this kind of attitude. As Rabindranath Tagore remarks : "this belief was firmly rooted in the sentiment of our leaders, as to lead them to hope that the victor would of his own grace have the path of freedom for the vanquished."[42]

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39. India Gazzette, July 20, 1880, quoted in B.B. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
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6

HUMANIST RAMMOHUN

S.N. RAY

Towards the end of 1831, after he had been in England for about eleven months, Rammohun thought of visiting France. He had admired France from a far as a country "favoured by Nature, richly adorned by the cultivation of the arts and sciences", and, above all, "blessed by the possession of a free constitution". That this land of his heart's desire could have a system of passports came to him as a shock. His first reaction was to give up the contemplated visit. But Free France kept haunting his fancy and compelled him to submit to the humiliation, as he thought it, of applying for a passport. Simultaneously, however, he addressed a letter to the French Foreign Minister for the removal of "all impediments to human intercourse" for the promotion of "the reciprocal advantage and enjoyment of the whole human race". His basic reason was that "not religion only, but unbiased common sense as well as the accurate deductions of scientific research lead to the conclusion that all mankind are one great family of which the numerous nations and tribes existing are only various branches". War might necessitate such restriction, but it should be only for the time being.

"But on general grounds I beg to observe that it appears to me, the ends of constitutional government might be better attained by submitting every matter of political difference between two countries to a Congress composed of an equal number from the Parliament of each; the decision of the majority to be acquiesced in by both nations, and the Chairman to be chosen by each nation

alternately, for one year, and the place of meeting to be one year within the limits of one country and the next within those of the other, such as at Dover and Calais for England and France. By such a Congress the matters of difference, whether political or commercial, affecting the Natives of any two civilised countries with constitutional governments might be settled amicably and justly to the satisfaction of both, and profound peace and friendly feelings might be preserved between them from generation to generation."

This was indeed a prophetic anticipation of the League of Nations and its more effective successor, the United Nations, as also of the Hague Tribunal.

Broad-based on Rammohun's settled faith in the Unity of Godhead and the Brotherhood of man, this even view of human relations marked all his utterances on public affairs. The memorial in protest of the Press Act (1823) which Rammohun submitted to the Supreme Court is aglow with the sense of human dignity. As a noble defence of the human right to freedom of speech, it has been thought comparable to Milton's *Areopagitica*. It failed of its purpose, as did his subsequent appeal to the King in Council, but they live as lasting testimony to his love of human freemdon. He fought for the annulment of the Jury Act of 1827 as it disvowed the equality of all in the eye of law.

His joy at the assertion of human rights and his pain at their violation are illustrated again and again in his reactions to political changes taking place in his time.

He was so miserable at the news that the Neapolitans were being reduced to slavery again after a brief heyday of hard earned freedom, that he had to excuse himself from dining at an English friend's saying, "From the late unhappy news I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe. . . . I consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own and their enemies as ours."

His joy was correspondingly great when he heard that constitutional government had been established in Spanish South America. He illuminated his house, treated sixty of his European friends, as being most likely to share his joy to a sumptuous dinner, and composed and delivered a speech in English hailing the event. To people who thought him crazy his reply was characteristic: "What ! ought I to be insensible the sufferings of my fellow

creatures wherever they are, or however unconnected by interests of religion or language?" Where would one find a more feeling re-assertion of the humanist creed, "Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto ?
(I am a man, and deem nothing that relates to man foreign to my feelings.)

At the success of the French Revolution of 1830, "so great was his enthusiasm that he could think and talk of nothing else". He greeted the event as a triumph of human liberty.

The human view of Politics Rammohun held even unto the last. He watched with intense anxiety the final stages, in the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832, and is reported to have declared that in the event of its failure, he would renounce his connection with England and proceed to America. To him the Bill was "not a British issue, but vitally affected the fortunes of mankind". The struggle was between liberty and oppression, between right and wrong—a politico-ethical Armageddon. What was his relief, and how elated he felt, when the Bill became Law. He rejoiced that he had "the infinite happiness of witnessing the salvation of the nation, nay of the whole world."

These were not just instances of an ebullient sentimentalism. Rammohun's humanistic ideas gradually crystallized into a positive doctrine of human welfare built upon the axiom that the natural human rights to life and property, as also the four freedoms of speech, opinion, conscience and association must be secured to the individual. These rights being factors of human happiness count pre- minently in any scheme to secure and promote collective human happiness. All legislative and social reform should be a practical quest for the *Lokesreya*, the common good or the happiness of the largest number. "True to the genius of India, he elevated this quest to the realm of Dharma." As its dynamics he adopted the Precepts of Jesus, which were "so well fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in the discharge of their various duties to God, to themselves, and to society".

Rammohun's humanism was indeed the most fundamental fact about him. It came into his life through his own life-experience and the twin channels of the Indian Reformation and the Renaissance whose conjoint operation brought Modern India into being.

The two great sorrows of his life—his estrangement from his

parents and the anguish he felt at the forced immolation as a Suttee of his brother's widow, opened his eyes to the subversion of human values in contemporary society and made him the staunch champion of human freedom that he was first and last.

Born in an affluent and loving family, Rammohun was given the best of education available at the time; and the piety of his parents so impressed itself upon him that at one stage in his boyhood he would not take even a drink of water before he had worshipped at the family shrine at daybreak. But even in his teens he had to renounce this happy and secure life. He suddenly lost faith in popular Hindu worship. He found religion priest-ridden, society benighted in superstition, learning stagnant. Popular Hinduism had all but forgotten the pure Monotheism of the Upanishads. Society was sanctioning inhumanities in the name of religion. A deep abasement of humanity had ensued. Rammohun was too young to try to put the crooked straight in society, but left called upon to make known, as far as it lay in his power, the Truth as it had dawned upon him. Presently he began to protest against the virtual negation of Monotheism in popular Hinduism with all the ardour of a sincere soul in which the thought-and-act bond was immediate, and to which human good was a value next only to Truth. Rammohun entered into earnest debates with the orthodox in the hope of demonstrating to them their error and its harmfulness. His father's remonstrances not having the desired effect, "a coolness" sprung up between father and son, and Rammohun wandered away from his father's roof to various parts of India and beyond to Tibet. And when after four years or so he returned home at his father's request, it was at no sacrifice of principles. For we hear of his "continued controversies with the Brahmins" and of his "interference with their system of burning widows and other pernicious practices reviving and increasing their animosity". Through their influence Rammohun's father was obliged to "withdraw his countenance" finally, though "his limited pecuniary suport was still continued."

After his father's death Rammohun felt free to oppose "the advocates of idolatry with still greater boldness", making it clear, however, that his campaign was not against Brahminism itself, but a perversion of it.

This cost him the last chance of reconciliation with his mother, now a widow and eager to receive him back in his ancestral home.

From 1814, availing himself of the art of printing, newly established in India then, he poured both books and pamphlets against the errors of the Brahmins "in the native and foreign languages". "This raised such a storm against me that I was deserted by every person except two or three Scotch friends, to whom, and to the nation to which they belong, I always feel grateful". He bore this hostility and social ostracism with the martyr's acceptance of God's purpose in his life.

"Taking the path which conscience and sincerity direct, I, born a Brahmin, have exposed myself to the complainings and reproaches even of some of my relations, but these, however, accumulated, I can tranquilly bear, trusting that a day will arrive when my humble endeavours will be viewed with justice, perhaps acknowledged with gratitude. At any rate, whatever men may say, I cannot be deprived of this consolation : my motives are acceptable to that Being who beholds in secret and compensates openly".

What enabled him to bear up under the cruellest deprivations of adolescence—exclusion from home and parental love, from social joys and security, and loss of ancestral faith—whether it was the constraint of religion or that of social good, we need not seek to determine. For, the first he had in him the makings of a unified man in a happy blend of thought, feeling and action. His religion was inseparable from his humanism. Thus in the preface to his *Vedant* he applies the pragmatic concepts, "inconvenient" and "injurious" to "the rites introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindu idolatry", and adduces "compassion" for his countrymen as a motive for the publication, which, he hoped, would "awaken them from their error". In the preface to the Precepts of Jesus he feelingly speaks of the social implications of religious belief :

> "A notion of the existence of a supreme, superintending power, the Author and Preserver of this harmonious system, who has organised and who regulates such an infinity of celestial and terrestrial objects, and a due estimation of that law which teaches that man should do unto others as he would wish to be done by, reconcile us to human nature, and tend to render our existence agreeable to ourselves and profitable to the rest of mankind." So the prayer which concludes the

First Appeal to the Christian Public is a devout intercession for the salvage of humanity through religion :

"May God render religion destructive of differences and dislike between man and man, and conducive to the peace and union of mankind.—*Amen.*

This human view of religious reform distinguished Rammohun from Martin Luther whose exclusive concern for religious reform could condone, even incite, the inhumanities of the Peasants' War.

By the same token, the inhumanity of the Suttee led him to challenge its religious sanction. The brutality which more often than not accompanied the rite came home to him with a maddening pain when a widow of his brother Jagamohun was burnt alive with his corpse in 1811. He took a secret vow never to rest till this inhuman custom was abolished. By continually agitating for its abolition for 15 years, by organising a Committee of Vigilance as an active step to prevent cruelty by proving from the Hindu Scriptures that the self-immolation of widows is nowhere enjoined as a duty, and that, on the contrary, a life of piety and self-abnegation is considered more virtuous than self-immolation, Rammohun made it possible for Lord William Bentinck to abolish the custom at long last in 1829.

Great as was the abolition of the Suttee, it was but just one wrong redressed in the unhappy social destiny of the Indian women in those dark days. The abolition might indeed turn out to be a doubtful boom without a clear social and legal recognition of women's rights. Rammohun's next task was to try to secure this. It is curious to think today that he found it necessary to begin by defending Women against the charges of lack of understanding, resolution, trustworthiness and self-control. He invoked the illustrious women of ancient India and the very institution of the Suttee to give the lie direct to the first two counts, and cited actual statistics and the institution of Polygamy to turn the tables on men on the last two. Thanks to Rammohun, the Brahmo Samaj, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and a section of the Hindus themselves, that Indian Womanhood was able to find its rightful place in society in an amazingly short time, and is as advanced today at a certain level as any of its sisterhoods in any part of the world. He opened the allied agitation for the revision of the Hindu Law of Inheritance in favour of women powerfully by publishing a tract on *The*

Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Right of the Females according to the Hindo Law of Inheritance. Here, "he pleads in effect for the economic independence of women by a recognition of their rights to inheritance", by depicting vividly the miseries of the widows' lot which made "self-immolation an escape from greater misery", by demonstrating how male usurpation of their rights have reduced them to complete subjection, and condemning polygamy as an evil calling for legal restraint. He even went so far as to recommend the Saiva system of marriage which permits widow, inter-caste, inter-racial, and post-puberty marriage within the framework of Hinduism. Almost all of these reformatory desiderata have since been accepted in society and in law. That the change over has taken more than a century only shows how deep-seated the evils were, and the obstinacy of custom.

The religious life of Rammohun grew through the processes of thought known in Philosophy as dogmatism, scepticism, criticism and dialectics. Very early in life he suddenly outgrew his unquestioning faith in popular Hindusim. What aroused him from his "dogmatic slumber" we do not definitely know. The successive impacts on his young mind of Islamic Monotheism and Vedantic Monism, the personal influence on him of a Tantric ascetic, and his own experiences during his wanderings, may well have wrought the change. He became acutely conscious of the accretions which in course of time, and through human agency, had come to overlay the core of truth in the religions.

This crisis of the spirit is recorded in his first published work, *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin.* It begings by recounting the falsehoods disfiguring the face of religions which he had noticed during his travels. He had also observed a native tendency in human beings to turn towards the Eternal Being. Looking for an explanation for the discrepancy, he has come to the conclusion that this unhappy state is due to human agency, to some men claiming to know more than they do, and using tradition and supernaturalism for purposes of deception. This human agency not only obscures the pristine truth and universality of the religions, but also drives the zealots "to indulge in nameless cruelties" to those of other persuasions. Rammohun was convinced that these "contradictory principles" were the outcome of error and "inconsistent with the wisdom and mercy of the great, generous and disinterested Creator". Taking his stand on Reason, Rammohun declares that

so long Reason rules, a simple but pure faith remains to console man, to warrant morality and orderly government. Reason, to Rammohun, is not just "dry reason"; it is also the faculty of intuitively knowing truth from untruth. Despite all denial and distortion, God and the Soul abide, but are hidden by a veil of human error which must be pierced. By and large negative, the tract yet shows Rammohun on the threshold of the stage of Criticism from which, through an intensive and encyclopaedic study of the religions, he attained to a dialectical understanding of their common truth and harmony.

Rammohun's studies in religion, sociology, history, politics and philosophy, involving the learning of at least three new languages, were bewilderingly vast in this phase of Criticism. He was bent on discovering the Truth and laying tormenting personal doubts to rest. He also presently found himself involved in controversies with doctors of various faiths, requiring that he should be able to meet them on their own ground. So thorough, unbiased and illuminating were his researches into the history of religions that he has come to be recognized and honoured as the Founder of the Science of Comparative Religion.

His personal need seems to have been best served at this time by the philosophy of the *Brahmasutras* as expounded by Sankara, which was shaped into a personal religion for him by his correlated study of the Upanishads, the Gita and the Precepts of Jesus—a rational faith attested by intuition and sefless living in the presence of God.

Through his studies in Comparative Religion and personal realization, Rammohun was now convinced that there was but one Theism with certain historical variations. In other words, he arrived at a Universalism in Religion which yet admitted variations in its historic utterances. Though ethnically conditioned, each one of the greater religions in its pristine purity, was the Truth, and not a mere fragment of it. This being so, each of these religions, after it has been cleared of later accretions, should be left free to preserve its historic or traditional continuity and to move forward along its own line of historic tradition to a Universal Ideal or Centre of Convergence. As the religions march forward following their own bents, "it will be found that they are not only approaching each other and growing by mutual contact, but are also converging to a common centre, which itself moves perpetually

forward," so that the ideal is never a *being* but a continuous *becoming*, an increasing realization of the Divine.

This was the consummation Rammohun had been devoutly longing for – the resolution of discords in perfect harmony, the completion of the process of thought by which contradictions are seen to merge themselves in a higher truth which comprehends them.

As the initiator of this grand conception of Universalism in religion Rammohun stands in the van of the modern Indian Reformation. A long line of reformers had indeed preceded him on the Indian scene. Their endeavour had been "to lead religion back to its source in the heart and soul of man" and to reconcile the contending faiths, chiefly Hinduism and Islam. But this had resulted as often as not in the formation of new sects and even new religions. The situation, complicated in itself, had been made more so by the advent of militant Christianity. Its association with the ruling race and its seeming association with Science, gave it a certain prestige. To Rammohun fell the dual task of fighting the narrowness and bigotry of these faiths in their popular forms and of championing their truth against unjust assaults, in the light of his Universalism

It would be unlike Rammohun to have drawn close to truth without trying to make it prevail. There was no cleavage in his life between faith and action. True to his nature, Rammohun proceeded to give shape to a long-cherished desire of his pilgrim soul bringing together peoples of all races and creeds in one Catholic worship of the Common father of all mankind.

Earlier he had founded the Atmiya Sabha, an association for "the dissemination of religious truth and the promotion of free discussion of theological subjects." The force of his personality drew to him a coterie of sympathetic souls. "No doctrine was propagated and the procedure of worship was of the utmost generality." After 1819, however, the meetings were discontinued.

It was only after nine long years that Rammohun could return to his plan of opening a place for an unsectarian worship of the One True God. In the interim he had passed through a phase which brought him into touch with a Western religious body which, reviled like his own, had a certain basic affinity with his view of theism. It came about in rather an unforeseen way.

Jointly with a young fellow missionary of the name of Yates

and Rammohun, William Adam of the Baptist Missionary Society, had undertaken to translate the four Gospels in Bengali. As the work of translation proceeded, discussion incidentally arose on the question of the divinity of Christ. With Rammohun arguing powerfully for the unity of the Godhead, the discussion grew to such intensity over certain passages in the Gospel of St. John that Yates, as a Trinitarian missionary, felt obliged to withdraw from the board of translators. Adam, contrarily, felt called upon to publicly renounce his Trinitarian faith and subscribe to Unitarianism. This was "the second fall of Adam," as some wag or dogmatist put it!

Having gone over to Unitarianism, Adam now, with Rammohun's help, was able to constitute a Unitarian Committee with a membership of ten in Calcutta. The objects of the Committee were "the promotion of education, rational discussion, and the publication of books both in English and in the native languages." Both morally and financially, Rammohun was the mainstay of the Unitarian activities in Calcutta. He regularly attended the Sunday services at the Unitarian Chapel, together with some members of his family and some of his disciples. When charged with attending this "place of worship instead of the numerously attended established Churches," Rammohun thought it fit to publish a pamphlet in reply saying that he preferred to worship with the Unitarians "because the Unitarians believe, profess and inculcate a doctrine which I find firmly maintained by the Christian Scripture, and by our most ancient writing commonly called the Vedas." Against what hostilities and at what sacrifice Rammohun supported the Unitarian activities in Calcutta has been described by one of his English friends : "He has done all this to the great detriment of his personal interests, being rewarded by the coldness and jealousy of all the great functionaries of Church and State in India, and supporting the Unitarian Chapel, the Unitarian Press, and the expense of his own publications—out of a private fortune of which he devotes more than one-third to acts of the purest philanthropy and benevolence." The Unitarian Mission did not, however, take root in India and round about 1823 "the little congregation melted away."

It was at about this time that the idea of founding an Indian Church for "the unsectarian worship of One True God" came to Rammohun. He called a meeting of his friends at which the idea

was heartily endorsed and substantial help towards the expenses was promised. The first Samaj was opened in August 1828. The services of the Samaj, held regularly on Saturdays, drew increasingly large congregations, and within two years Rammohun was able to raise sufficient sums for the purchase of a house which would be a permanent place of worship for the members. The Church was ceremonially opened on the 23rd of January, 1830. Consistently with the Universalism in Religion at which he had arrived in his own spiritual development, he did not restrict the use of the place of worship to any particular religion or sect. The worship contemplated by the Trust Deed of the Samaj was to be open without distinction to all, but was to be conducted on such lines as would not only tend to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe, but also to the promotion of charity, morality, piety and the strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds." The Samaj was "the symbol of Rammohun's great ambition to bring together men of all existing persuasions into a system of universal worship of the One True God." The idea was so much a part of Rammohun's being that the Trust Deed of the Samaj, required but to serve a legal requirement, became under his hand a manifesto of the New Theism and a piece of literature as well, eloquent and soul-animating. Rammohun could hardly refer to the new foundation in after years without a tear glistening in his eye, and Keshab Chunder Sen thus emphasized its stateliness :

> "Who can contemplate without emotion the grandeur of such a Universal Church, a Church not local or denominational, but wide as the Universe, and co-extensive with the human race, in which all distinctions of creed and colour melt into one absolute brotherhood ? Who can look without wonder and profound reverence upon the giant mind which conceived and realised such a Church ? The philanthropic heart interested in the welfare of all mankind cannot, in its highest aspirations, wish anything more."

Of more immediate concern to the life of the nation were Rammohun's contributions to the Indian Renaissance which came in the wake of the impact of the West. His majestic figure dominating the Indian scene was the first to catch the glow of the new

enlightenment just as the Everest is the first among the Himalayan peaks to be tipped with the dawn. He realized before any of his contemporaries the value of the new Learning of the West. He felt that it would not only admit India to the world of Science but would free the mind and spirit of India from the bonds of scholasticism. As early as 1816 we find him working jointly with his friend, David Hare, for the founding of the Hindu College, which under the influence of Derozio was presently to become the nursery of free thought and courageous, even dangerous, living. He personally represented to Sir Hyde East, the Chief Judge of the Calcutta Supreme Court in those days, that many of the leading Hindus were desirous of forming an establishment for the education of the children in a liberal manner as practised by Europeans of condition, and sought his permission to convene a meeting as a first step. How unselfish Rammohun's part in the project was became clear when due to the hostility of the orthodox, he withdrew from the scheme and set up and maintained at his own expense for years an English school on much the same pattern.

Deeply versed in Oriental learning though he was, he felt called upon to resist the Orientalists' plan of starting a college for Sanskritic studies, and pressed instead for the creation of a college on new lines. His letter to Lord Amherst on the subject has become a classic of educational thinking :

> "If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the Schoolmen, which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British-legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe, and providing a college furnished with necessary books, implements and other apparatus."

How much in advance of his time Rammohun was in this is shown by the fact that he was the solitary signatory to his letter, and it was on this score that the letter was deemed unworthy of official notice, the more so because "the signatory's opinions were well known to be hostile to those entertained by almost all his countrymen." Bishop Heber's praise of the letter that 'for good English, good sense and forcible, arguments, it is a curiosity, as coming from an Indian," does but stress the loneliness of the man born before his time. To the same effect is the observation of the Education Commission of 1832 that "it took twelve years of controversy, the advocacy of Macaulay, and the decisive action of a new Governor-General, before the Committee could, as a body, acquiesce in the policy advocated by him (Rammohun).

History bears record how the adoption of the New Learning and the scientific habit of mind have drawn India into the main stream of modern civilization. It is true that the new wine of the Renaissance was too heady at first for many of the young alumni of the Hindu College who were for an indiscriminate imitation of Western ways. It threw the Indian youth off their balance at first, but happily in most cases restored them to a higher sanity, as in the instance of Madhusudan. The historical regeneration of India demanded that at a certain stage Young India should lose itself to find itself. Rammohun was the sponsor of this resurrection.

A fact about this evolution which has sometimes been overlooked is the part played by the English language in its quickening and consolidation. It would be no exaggeration to say that except for the eager adoption of English and the approximation to English thought needed in its practice, oral and written, the modernization of the Indian mind would have been delayed and less complete. The phenomenon had its parallel in the discovery and tireless cultivation of Ciceronian Latin in the first phase of the European Renaissance. Rammohun's own phenomenal mastery of English shows how deep he had drunk of English thought, and thus it was that Bentham could compliment him on his English style, preferring it even to James Mill's. The most typical figure of the Indian Renaissance, Rammohun was the most Indian as also the most English among his contemporaries.

That Rammohun's humanism should extend to the State Polity as well was inevitable. As editor of two newspapers he was

a commentator on all major changes in the national life for years, and his successive "Communinations" to the Board of Control were a marvel of close 'observation; sound judgement and comprehensiveness of views'. "They showed him to be at once the Philosopher and Patriot. They are full of political wisdom; and there is reason to believe that they were highly valued by Government." This was what Dr. Lent Carpenter and other English friends of India thought about Rammohun's labours to secure a fair revision of the Company's Charter. Rammohun was not wholly satisfied with the results as "the prospect of an educated India, approximating to Western standards of culture, seems to have never been long absent from Rammohun's mind," and he did "claim in advance for his countrymen the political and civil rights which progress in civilization demands." He believed in the British connection and was realistic enough to suggest reforms within the framework of the British rule. But he believed that the British suzerainty was temporary. It has been recorded by Arnot that "forty years was the limit which the Rajah allowed for working out England's cultural and humanitarian mission in India; because he believed that during this time British rule would be able to bring the Indian mind into living contact with modern world-culture, and establish a system of modern democratic government in the country, which would bring India upto the level of the civilised and free countries of the world."

But he was dreaming all the while of even a higher destiny for India. To frame this dream in the words of Dr. B.N. Seal and Miss Collet, two of his most illuminating interpreters :

> "And in the end there came to this Prophet of a humanity on his deathbed the vision of a free, puissant and enlightened India, the civiliser and enlightener of Asiatic nationalities, a gold link between the East and the West, a vision as emblematic of the past, as it was prophetic of the future history of humanity."
>
> "We shall find that he leads the way towards a civilisation which is neither Western nor Eastern, but something vastly higher, larger, nobler than both."

Summing up within himself the best of both the Indian Renaissance and the Reformation, Rammohun was perhaps the

most comprehensive soul in modern history, Erasmus, we know, stood away from the Reformation, and Calvin cannot be imagined to have approved of the kind of synthesis which Pico della Mirandola sought in vain to achieve between Pagan and Christian in religion, and which was actually achieved by Renaissance Art. Rammohun's attempt to synthesize the values of the East and the West is the most earnest so far made in history, with effects still to be worked out in a federation of mankind.

7

RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY : Upholder of Synthesis between Eastern and Western Values

K. THIAGARAJAN

Raja Rammohun Roy, the undisputed father of the Indian renaissance was born in 1772, 15 years after the battle of plassey. He possessed to a very hig degree many of the qualities of head and heart which are usually associated with the regeneration of India in the 19th century. A rational approach to religious ideas; love of liberty which knew no geographical bounds; high appreciation of the value and cultural potentialities of English education as well as of the importance of Bengali prose as a means of the propagation of knowledge and liberal ideas; an earnest endeavour to improve the political status of Indians and to safeguard their civil liberty and economic interest by judicious reforms in the administrative system—all these marked him as an outstanding figure in India in the 19th century. It is no mere accident that no Indian before him and very few after him have received such high honours in England as did Rammohun.

Raja Rammohun Roy has been verily hailed by scholars as "the father of modern India", "a peak in the panorama of modern culture and civilisation", "a precursor, an archetype, a prophet of coming humanity". Similarly, the renaissance in India initiated by Raja Rammohun Roy was described by no less a scholar than Prof. Jadunath Sakar as "the beginning of a glorious dawn, the like of which the history of the world has not seen elsewhere . . . . truly a

Renaissance, wider, deeper and more revolutionary than that of Europe after the fall of Constantinople. . . ."

It is not yet proved whether Ram Mohan was born in 1772 or 1774. He was born in an orthodox brahmin family in a Bengal village and had his education in pathashala, Muktab and madrassa. For further embellishment in Persian and Sanskrit, he was sent to Patna and Benaras. English education was till then non-existent and Bengali had no status as a worthy vernacular. Though born in the darkest age in modern Indian history, Ram Mohan's careful study of Hindu Smriti and Mohammedan law and jurisprudence, influence of universalistic outlook of Mohammedan rationalists and Unitarians and also the lyrical raptures of Sufi poets and Hafiz broadened his vision and outlook.

Rammohan served under Digby, a Collector, from 1805 to 1815, and then retired and settled down in Calcutta in fairly affluent circumstances. Here he began his life's work, a crusade against the Hindu belief in a multiplicity of gods and goddesses and the worship of their images alongside of the establishment of the worship or mediatation of one God. For this purpose he carried on vigorous disputation and discussion and wrote a large number of polemical tracts and translated into Bengali a large number of Upanishads with a view to proving his contention that pure Hinduism in the Veda and Vedanta, which along he acknowledged as authoritative, did not support the idolatry of the Hindus, but preached the worship of one God or Brahma.

In order to propagate these views he made arrangements for regular gatherings of those who believed in the unsectarian worship of the one true God, and this developed into a regular institution name the Brahma Samaj, which was formally inaugurated on 20th August, 1828. It is this institution which is now represented by three different churches known as Adi Brahma Samaj Navavidhan, and the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, and these have preserved the memory of the religious reforms of Rammohan. But it must be pointed out that Rammohan lived and died as a Hindu—true Hindu, as he would often say—but some followers of the three churches mentioned above regard themselves as outside the fold of Hinduism.

In the realm of journalism Rammohun achieved much pioneer work. He was the father of Bengali prose and pioneered in writing serious chaste essays in Bengali. He edited one of the oldest weeklies, Samvad Kaumudi, in Bengali, also another in Persian

which was appreciated in Persia too. He was interested in continental politics and wrote on such themes as War with China, barbarism meted out to South Ireland, famine in Ireland etc., in Samvad Kaumudi. Atmiya Sabha, a select small gathering of men of like taste every week sat together in Ram Mohun's house. It was a replica of Brahmo Samaj in embryo. He wanted the jury system to be extended to village courts and pointed out how the dearth of judicial authorities (courts) and dearth of sufficient qualified judges make exercise of law handicapped in rural areas. As there was no common language between the administrator and the administered, and European Judges were not acquainted with native rules, experience of natives should supplant experience of the Europeans.

Just hundred years before Gandhi's attendance at the Round Table Conference, Ram Mohun, the first Bengali to do so, sailed for England with a political mission. On that year, 1830, the charter of the East India Company was to be renewed and the much-discussed Reform Bills were to be presented in the Parliament. When the news of liberation of the South American colonies from Spanish domination reached him, he illumined his house and gave a party to 60 friends. On his way to England he saw the French tricolours flying over two ships and kept repeating, "Glory, glory, glory to France". He was greatly influenced by the French Revolution and American Independence. Again, when the Austrian army crushed the Nepolitans, he cancelled his appointment with a foreigner and wrote to him : "I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to nations of Europe and Asia . . . ." He was often seen in the lobby of the British Parliament in 1830, was seated with political envoys when the King was coronated. The King twice invited him in the palace. The Emperor of France also twice dined with him when he visited France. A questionnaire with more than 50 entries related to Indian topics was set before him and he ably gave all the evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons. Though himself a rich landlord, Ram Mohun passionately pleaded for decrease of rental from the ryots who badly needed economic succour. He also succeeded in getting an increase of 3 lakhs of rupees to the annual pension of the de-throned last Moghul Nawab who conferred the title Raja on him before he left for England.

Ram Mohun's philosophy of life was synthetic and integral

in character. His was a many-sided personality. He was indeed one of the masters that wanted to find the soul of India in Indian soil but he wanted a free and rational synthesis with English culture based on the advancement of learning and democracy. I cannot conclude better, than quoting what the Raja's English biographer, Miss Collet who summed up his career as follows : "Ram Mohun stands in history as the living bridge over which India marches from her unmeasured past to her calculable future. He was the arch which panned the gulf that yawned between ancient waste and modern humanity, between superstition and science, between despotism and democracy, between immobile custom and a conservative progress, between a bewildering polytheism and a pure, if vague, theism. He was the mediator of his people, harmonizing in his own person, often by means of his own solitary sufferings, the conflicting tendencies of immemorial tradition and of inevitable enlightenment."

8

THE CONCEPT OF UNIVERSAL RELIGION IN RAMMOHUN ROY

ARIVIND SHARMA*

I

Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1883) has been hailed not only as the Father of Modern India[1], and as the first great modern Hindu[2], but is also said to have been 'so much ahead of his time that he seriously contemplated a universal religion which would some day be accepted by the whole of mankind'.[3] It is with the last aspect of his life and thought that we are particularly concerned here.

II

It will be useful to begin with a survey of the Roy's contacts with the major religious traditions of mankind, for there seems to be little doubt that 'he had been brought by his pioneer studies in Comparative Religion to Universalism.'[4] One may begin first with his background. In an autobiographical letter[5] to a friend he described his ancestry and his early life till the age of sixteen thus :

> My ancestors were Brahmins of a high order, and, from time immemorial, were devoted to the religious duties of their race,

*Temple University, Philadelphia, U.S.A.

> down to my fifth progenitor, who about one hundred and forty years ago gave up spiritual exercises for worldly pursuits and aggrandisement. His descendants ever since have followed his example, and according to the usual fate of courtiers, with various success, sometimes rising to honour and sometimes falling; sometimes rich and sometimes poor; sometimes excelling in success, sometimes miserable through disappointment. But my maternal ancestors, being of the sacerdotal order by profession as well as by birth, and of a family than which none holds a higher rank in that profession, have upto the present day uniformly adhered to a life of religious observances and devotion, preferring peace and tranquillity of mind to the excitements of ambition, and all the allurements of worldly grandeur.
>
> In conformity with the usage of my paternal race, and the wish of my father, I studied the Persian and Arabic languages,—these being indispensable to those who attached themselves to the courts of the Mohammedan princes, and agreeably to the usage of my maternal relations, I devoted myself to the study of the Sanscrit and the theological works written in it, which contain the body of Hindoo literature, law and religion.

In considering the contribution of his background towards the growth of universalism in his outlook one meets with two apparently opposing tendencies. On the one hand his Hindu background may have predisposed him towards universalism to a certain extent, for he wrote in 1821 : 'It is well-known to the whole world, that no people on earth are more tolerant than the Hindoos, who believe all men to be equally within the reach of Divine beneficence, which embraces the good of every religious sect and denomination.'[6]

On the other hand, however, Roy never in his own eyes, ceased to be a Brahmin. Sir Brajenranath Seal has pointed out that 'he was a Brahmin of Brahmins, always claiming to be within the Brahmin fold and keeping his *Upavita* as an external mark of that communion.' But Seal goes on to refer to his 'boldly taking heterodox food and drink, adopting a Mohammedan child and calling him Rajaram, associating with the missionaries, crossing the seas, fighting *Suttee*, caste, and all manner of degenerate customs of the day that weighed down women and Sudras.'[7]

Until now we have established one characteristic of Roy's profile—his Hindu ancestry in the form of his Brahmanical heritage which, however, was not as circumscribing in his case as could have been. We also discover from an account of his friend, William Adam, that he was independent-minded, and had argument with his father. William Adam wrote[8] :

> It is not often that we get an insight in Hindu family life but his son gave me a slight glance at least in referring to the amicable differences that arose between himself and his father on this subject. I inferred from what R.R. said that he always left it to his father, as the head and most venerable member of the family to open the question which he thought fit to moot, and when he had finished his immediate argument, he was generally willing to listen to his son with patience, which sometimes, however, forsook him. The son's response after the necessary preliminary admissions, usually began with the adversative article 'But' (*Kintu*). 'But notwithstanding all this the orthodox conclusion you aim at does not follow.' The father complained of this, and, on one occasion at least, burst out in the tone of remonstrance, as of an injured party. Whatever argument I adduce you have always your *kintu*, your counter-statement, your counter-argument, your counter-conclusion to oppose to me.' The son recounted this to me with half a smile on his lips and a touch of humour in his voice, but without any expression of disrespect to his father.

One is, therefore, not surprised to discover what Roy tells us about himself later on : 'When about the age of sixteen, I composed a manuscript calling in question the idolatrous system of the Hindoos. This, together with my known sentiments on the subject, having produced a coolness between me and my immediate kindred, I proceeded on my travels.' But when he had reached the age of twenty, he tells us 'my father recalled me, and restored me in his favour. . . .'[9]

Thus, it seems that the first step Roy took in the direction of evolving a religiously independent position was to take a critical view of his own tradition whose iconolatry he found difficult to condone. But he was careful to point out[10] later that

> The ground which I took in all my controversies was, not that of opposition to Brahminism, but to a perversion of it; and I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahmins was contrary to the practice of their ancestors, and the principles of the ancient books and authorities, which they profess to revere and obey. Notwithstanding the violence of the opposition and resistance to my opinions, several highly respectable persons both among my own relations and others, began to adopt the same sentiments.

Thus though Roy was critical of certain aspects of Hinduism he did not abandon it. Yet the fact that he could take a critical view of his own tradition may be seen as an indication of a latent universalism as it indicated that some day he might transcend its confines.

The next forward movement in Roy's thought in the direction of universalism took place when, after the death of his father he settled down in Murshidabad where he wrote the first of his many tracts : *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin* or a Gift to the Monotheists. It was written in Persian with a preface in Arabic and although published in 1804 did not become 'known to the public till it was translated by a learned Maulavi in 1884'. In this book one meets with an early statement of what turned out to be one of the central ideas on which his thought would converge repeatedly. He wrote[11] :

> I travelled in the remotest parts of the world, in plains as well as in hilly lands, and found the inhabitants thereof agreeing generally in believing in the personality of One Being who is the source of all that exists and its governor, and disagreeing in giving peculiar attributes to that Being and in holding different creeds consisting of the doctrines of religion and precepts of *haram* (forbidden) and *halat* (lawful). From this induction it has been known to me that turning generally towards One Eternal Being, is like a natural tendency in human beings and is common to all individuals of mankind equally. And the inclination of each sect of mankind to a particular god or gods, holding certain especial attributes, and to some peculiar forms of worship or devotion, is an excrescent quality grown (in mankind) by habit and training.

Just as earlier Roy had found idolatry inconsistent with the

spiritual nature of God, he now found the existence of intermediaries inconsistent with the direct guidance such a God had to offer. He wrote :[12]

> Some people argue in this way that the Almighty Creator has opened the way of guidance to moral beings through the medium of prophets or leaders of religions. This is evidently futile, because the same people believe that all things in creation, whether good or bad, proceed from the Great Creator without any intermediate agency, and that the apparent causes are the means and conditions of that (i.e., their coming into existence). Hence, it is to be seen whether the sending of prophets and revelation to them from God, are immediately from God or through intermediate agency. In the first case, there is no necessity of an intermediate agency for guidance to salvation. And in the second case, there should be a series of intermediate agencies. Hence, the advent of prophets and revelation like other external things have no reference to God, but depend upon the invention of an inventor. Prophets and others should not be particularly connected (or mixed up) with the teaching of a faith. Besides, what one nation calls a guide to a true faith, another calls a misleading to an erroneous way.

This text is also remarkable from several other points of view. Roy clearly sensed that some of his statements may not go down well with his audience. It was clear to him, however, that truth may lie with a minority and the majority may even be ranged against it. He wrote : 'It is to be seen that the truth of a saying does not depend upon the multiplicity of the sayers and the non-reliability of a narration cannot arise simply out of the paucity of the number of the narrators. For it is admitted by the seekers of truth that truth is to be followed, although it is against the majority of the people.'[13]

And he was to write later : 'By taking the path which conscience and sincerity direct, I, born a Brahmin, have exposed myself to the complainings and reproaches, even of some of my relations, whose prejudices are strong, and whose temporal advantage depends upon the present system. But, these, however, accumulated, I can tranquilly bear, trusting that a day will arrive

when my humble endeavours will be viewed with justice—perhaps acknowledged with gratitude. At any rate, whatever men may say, I cannot be deprived of this consolation : my motives are acceptable to that Being, who beholds in secret, and compensates openly.'[14]

Roy had also begun to evaluate his audience critically. As U.N. Ball points out, in this treatise Rammohun classifies the people into four groups :

Firstly—A class of deceivers who in order to attract the people to themselves wilfully invent doctrines, creeds and faiths and put the people to troubles and cause disunion among them.

Secondly—A class of deceived people, who without enquiring into the fact, adhere to others.

Thirdly—A class of people who are deceivers and also deceived; they are those who having themselves faith in the sayings of another induce others to adhere to them.

Fourthly—Those who, by the help of Almighty God, are neither deceivers nor deceived.[15]

Roy was later on to use this taxonomy, especially the first category in scathing criticism of Hindu priestcraft.[16]

It appears, however, that just as he had alienated the Hindus by his iconoclasm, his attack on what Iqbal was to later on call Pirism in Islam did not go down well with the Muslims and he may have had to leave Murshidabad on that account.[17]

After these brushes with Hinduism and Islam Roy next came in contact with Christianity. In 1820, he published a tract entitled *The Precepts of Jesus, The Guide to Peace and Happiness.* In this work, however, he concentrated on the moral doctrines of the New Testament on the following grounds :[18]

> A conviction in the mind of its total ignorance of the nature and of the specific attributes of the Godhead, and a sense of doubt respecting the real essence of the soul, give rise to feelings of great dissatisfaction with our limited powers, as well as with all human acquirements which fail to inform us on these interesting points. On the other hand, a notion of the existence of a supreme superintending power, the author and preserver of this harmonious system, who has organized and who regulates such an infinity of celestial and terrestrial objects, and a due estimation of that law which teaches that man

should do unto others as he would wish to be done by, reconcile us to human nature, and tend to render our existence agreeable to ourselves and profitable to the rest of mankind. The former of these sources of satisfaction, namely, a belief in God, prevails generally, being derived either from tradition and instruction, or from an attentive survey of the wonderful skill and contrivance displayed in the works of nature. The latter, although it is partially taught also in every system of religion with which I am acquainted, is principally inculcated by Christianity.

But Roy's attempt to dissociate Christian theology from morality caused an uproar among the missionaries, especially as he thought that the Christian doctrine of trinity seemed to compromise God's unity. Roy thus became a unitarian and in fact corresponded with fellow-unitarians in Boston, but he was branded a 'heathen' closer home.[19]

By now Roy had settled down in Calcutta, the intellectual and political capital of India, having become financially secure by the time he turned forty-two. It is now time to review his evolution in the direction of universalism. Such a review suggests that he saw an ethical monotheism as constituting the core of the truly religious life. Accretions on or deviations from this doctrine, however, had occurred in every major religion he had encountered, and he had also incurred the hostility of the followers of each of these religions for pointing out what he regarded to be their deviation from the truth. As a matter of fact in these religious controversies he had to defend the original Hinduism, Islam and Christianity against the champions of orthodoxy in each of these churches or religious communities. He had also to defend Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, each, against the attacks of the champions of the other two.'[20] He also argued against the futility of asserting the superiority of one religion over the other.[21]

III

It is perhaps clear from the above discussion that so far as Roy was concerned the non-idolatrous worship of one God was not possible within the confines of either Hinduism or Islam or Christianity as they were actually practised even though it lay at the heart of these religions. It should not come as a total surprise,

therefore, that there emerged in 1828 under Roy's guidance, a body precisely for such worship, a body which ultimately developed into the Brahmo Samaj.

The title deed of the Brahmo Samaj, to which Roy was a signatory, gives an interesting and perhaps also an accurate picture of where Roy was at by now. The following passage,[22] though lengthy, of the deed is particularly notable; much of which is full of the legalese natural to such a document. The deed was intended to set up a

> place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious and devout manner for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe but not under or by any other name, designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any particular Being or Beings by any man or set of men whatsoever and that no graven image, statute or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within the said messuages, building, land, tenements, hereditaments and premises and that no sacrifice, offering or oblation of any kind or thing shall ever be permitted therein and that no animal or living creature shall within or on the said messuage, building, land, tenements, hereditaments and premises be deprived of life either for religious purposes or for food and that no eating or drinking (except such as shall be necessary by any accident for preservation of life) feasting or rioting be permitted therein or thereon and that in conducting the said worship and adoration no object, animate or inanimate, that has been or is or shall hereafter become or be recognized as an object of worship by any man or set of men shall be reviled or slightingly or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to either in preaching, praying or in the hymns or other mode of worship that may be delivered or used in the said messuage or building and that no sermon, preaching, discourse, prayer or hymn be delivered, made or used in such worship but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the Universe to the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and the strengthening the

bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds and also that a person of good repute and well known for his knowledge, piety and morality be employed.

It should be noted that according to the deed : (1) only one God was to be worshipped; (2) that this worship was to be non-idolatrous; (3) that this worship was to be non-sanguinary; (4) that any theist, including non-Hindus, could attend; and (5) the worship was meant to unify "*men of all religious persuasions and creeds*".

This raises the question : Was Roy envisaging the Brahmo Samaj as the nucleus of a universal religion ? Indeed, what was Roy's position with regard to the relationship among the various religions ?

In this context several viewpoints have been offered. Sometimes these are mentioned alongside without being distinguished which can cause some confusion.[23] Sometimes the same scholar seems to adopt more than one viewpoint. Thus, as 'a controversy of a nobler kind' surrounds the issue of the religious position Roy finally adopted, it would be useful to distinguish among these various viewpoints for the sake of clarity.

IV

One extreme position in this regard is represented in the document from the Madras Record Office describing the reactions of certain inhabitants of Berhampur (Ganjam) on Rammohun Roy's religious views.[24] In this document Roy is denounced as "neither a Christian nor a Mohammadan, nor a Hindu.' (This contemporary assessment may be contrasted with a modern and sympathetic one that 'if he was a Hindu of the Hindus, he was also a Mohammadan with the Mohammadans, and a Christian with Christians.'[25]) The merit of the criticism levelled against Roy's position lies in indicating the danger that one who claims to accept all may be accepted by none—the universal pitfall of universalism. The document offers the following fuller estimate of Roy's position : 'In the case of Rammohun Roy, how intelligent and man of talents he may be, yet from his late profession of belief in one God, in an irregular course, forsaking all religious rites, and ordinances of his caste, as a Brahmin, he is not accounted for

among any regulated class of religions. He is neither a Christian, a Mohammaden, or a Hindu, but a free thinking man, abandoned by all religions'.[26]

One of the petitioners even states that 'in the month of August 1827', he ran up from Ganjam to Calcutta on Dawk to see this person Rammohun Roy and to ascertain the religion he followed, but to his extremc regret found that his religion is no religion and his laws are no laws, but a conglomeration of all stitched into a singular one.'[27]

Any attempt at universalims run the risk of being considered as inauthentic and arbitrarily eclectric, along with the risk that one who belongs to all may be said to belong to none.[28] Both of these dangers are reflected in the petition but can Roy in fairness be accused along these lines ? When it is alleged that he had no religion what is obviously meant is that Roy could not be clearly placed within a historically identifiable religion. Two considerations must be borne in mind at this point. Firstly, that Roy himself never claimed to have ceased to be a Hindu and in point of fact defended Hinduism[29] against what he regarded as unfair attacks on it.[30] Secondly, if by having no religion is meant that Roy was not 'religious', this does not seem to be true. In a formal sense he continued to be a Hindu and died as one. This is at least partly proved by his 'utterance of the sacred 'AUM'— one of the last words he was heard to utter'.[31] In a broader sense he can be said to have believed in a form of universal theism. In a moral sense he led an exemplary life in several ways, as is reflected in his agitation against *Suttee* etc. Roy's humanitarianism is well-known.[32] It is clear then that the view that Roy had no religion is misleading, for the 'loathed and abominated' scepticism 'as something worse than idolatry'.[33]

Another extreme position seems to be represented by the view which is the opposite of the one discussed above—and anticipated in that discussion, namely, that he was a Hindu as well as a Muslim and a Christian. Thus, some Christian friends claimed that he was 'in the end a decided Christian',[34] and 'after his death, Moslems claimed him for Islam'.[35] This position is difficult to sustain in the light of the facts already discussed. He studied and perhaps absorbed elements from Christianity and Islam but to say that he became a Christian or a Muslim in the usually accepted senses of the term seems to be going too far. Indeed 'differing

estimates of his faith had heen anticipated by him. Babu N. Bose used to tell how 'Rammohun Roy before leaving for England, told him that the followers of every prevailing religion would reckon him, after his death, as one of their co-religionists. The Mohammedans would call him a Mohammedan, the Hindus would call him a Vedantic Hindu, the Christians a Unitarian Christian'. But Babu N. Bose added, 'he really belonged to no sect. His religion was Universal Theism'. As he believed this principle to be the quintessence of every religion, he was able to approach the advocates of the most different creeds with a sympathy and an emphasis on points of agreement which they could only interpret as complete adhesion'.[36]

A third extreme position seems to be represented by claims that he had founded—or at least anticipated, a universal religion. Thus, V.S. Naravane argues that 'he seriously contemplated a universal religion which would some day be accepted by the whole of mankind'.[37] In support of this claim he cites the pamphlet on 'Universal Religion' published in 1829. Elsewhere too he points out that 'one of Ram Mohun's last works, published shortly before his death, is a booklet on 'Universal Religion' in which he 'takes the lowest common measure of all religions, eliminating everything that divides one religion from another."[38] This last-mentioned booklet I have not been able to trace but the tract of 1826 can be examined closely with a view to determining whether it provides for a universal religion. The following summary of the tract along with a critical comment at the end is provided by Biswas and Ganguli[39] :

> In 1829 he published a tract entitled, *The Universal Religion : Religious Instruction founded On Sacred Authorities.* This is a short catechism, with proof texts from the sacred writings of Hinduism. It describes worship as 'a contemplation of the attributes of the Supreme Being.' It styles the object of worship 'the Author and Governor of the Universe', 'imperceptible and indefinable', but by His creation and government of the universe known to exist. Worship is to be performed 'by bearing in mind that the Author and Governor of this visible Universe is the Supreme Being and comparing this idea with the sacred writings and with reason'. Furthermore, 'it is proper to regulate our food and conduct agreeably to the

sacred writings'. For this worship 'a suitable place is certainly preferable, but not necessary'; 'in whatever place, towards whatever quarter time the mind is best at rest, that place, that quarter, and that time is the most proper'. This kind of worship cannot be hostile to any other kinds, nor can they reasonably be hostile to it; 'for all believe the object whom they adore to be the Author and Governor of the Universe'.

This is a bold statement to make in face of the facts of fetishism and kindred cults. The infinitely diverse religions of the world will scarcely yield as their common denominator a Theism so pure and lofty as Rammohun's 'Universal Religion'. But Rammohun believed in it intensely and the progress of the Brahma Sabha was witness to his faith.

A little reflection will suggest that by universal religion Roy meant what was universal in religion rather than a universal religion. Even Sir Brajendranath Seal, who otherwise generally treats of Roy's concepts carefully seems to fall into the trap when he says that Roy 'had been brought by his pioneer studies in Comparative Religion to Universalism,—*and, what is more, to a Universal Scripture, a Universal authority as underlying all historic scriptures and all historic authorities*'.[40] There seems to be little evidence to support this, especially the idea of a Universal Scripture, reminiscent of the Islamic Umm-al-Kitab or the Mother-Book.

Seal's views on other aspects of Roy's universal religion are, however, illuminating, especially in the following ways. Firstly, Seal points out that although in their pure forms according to Roy Hinduism (i.e., Vedanta), Islam and Christianity shared a common theism, they stressed different aspects of the same intuition. Thus, the Vedanta was 'strongest in *Jnana*', Islam in the sense of 'divine government' and Christianity 'in ethical and social guidance to peace and happiness in the path of life'.[41] Secondly, Seal recognises that what Ray was really trying to build up was 'one theistic fraternity',[42] rather than a universal religion, it would appear. Thirdly, on the question of what to do with the creeds and councils and rituals and symbols which divide religions Roy is shown as emphasizing that in the case of creed 'an original purity of doctrine and practice' should be restored, which was corrupted by later priestcraft and that in the case of rituals and symbols the

accent must be on simplicity so that the rituals clarify one's attitude towards rather than obfuscate the object of worship.[43] Fourthly, with respect to religious law Roy advocated their reform in the light of rationality.[44]

It is in elaborating Roy's idea of a universal religion as an ideal, however, the Seal seems to provide a particularly useful perspective from one point of view. He points out that Roy's view did not carry the assumption that 'the great historic religions, these national embodiments of universalism, will cease or be merged one in another'.[45] He, however, further elaborates Roy's views thus. 'To put the Raja's implications in terms of our own age, this is not a static ideal, but a developing ideal, and as the different religions in the course of their own forward march approach one another and approach the common centre more and more, the centre of convergence itself shifts or moves forwards; so that the ideal always remains an ideal, beckoning ever forward and upward to the infinitudes and beautitudes of God'.[46]

Seal seems to be on sound grounds in indicating a centre of universal convergence in terms of Roy's thought but it seems his own further interpretation of the shifts in the centre is more dynamic than Roy's. It is not so much Roy's position as his own dynamic interpretation of Roy's position.

Yet another interpretation of Roy's religious position has it that he merely used religious reform to secure the greatest good of the greatest number. Thus, Kissory Chand Mitter has argued that 'Rammohun Roy was a religious Benthamite, and estimated the different creeds existing in the world, not according to his notion of their truth or falsehood, but his notion of their utility; according to their tendency, in his view, to promote the maximization of human happiness, and the minimization of human misery. His patronage, therefore, of any system of creed cannot be constructed into a profession of it.'[47] The point of view has its merit in that it serves to explain Roy's reforming zeal. It is further claimed, however, that 'His advocacy and support of the doctrines inculcated by religions which are in themselves diametrically opposed to each other, though it might apparently evidence his vacillation, was in fact the result of his religious utilitarianism; for we can confidently assert that in reference to his religious belief not the slightest change took place in his mind for the last fifty years of his life.'[48] This leaves one with the impression as if no sincere

beliefs sustained Roy for fifty years of his life and religion for him was merely an instrument of social engineering. It is, therefore, important to note that the immediately following passage deals with his religious and not merely reformist convictions :[49]

> From his first renunciation of Hindu idolatry at the age of sixteen to the last moment of his existence, he maintained his religious sentiments, whatever they were, nearly unaltered. The real religious sentiments of the Hindu reformer are embodied in a pamphlet written in the most choice Persian, with an Arabic preface. Though printed in his lifetime and seen by some of his friends, yet it was not published until his death; for he gave it as his last injunction, on leaving his country for Europe, that it should be published after his departure from this world. This work, which is entitled '*Tohufut-ul Mowa-hedeen*', or a Present to Unitarians, discloses his belief in the unity of the Deity, His infinite power and infinite goodness; and in the immortality of the soul. It breathes an uncompromising and inveterate hostility to idolatry in all its forms. While due meed of applause is given to the Mahommedan creed for being based on what he considered as the great doctrine of unity, prophetical pretensions are treated with merited ridicule and contempt.

What then are we to say in conclusion about Roy's concept of universal religion ? It seems that the following conclusions are in order : (1) Roy did employ the expression 'universal religion'; (2) the use of this expression, however, should not be taken to mean that he intended a universal religion to replace all existing religions; just as a universal language may replace all other languages; (3) Roy seemed to refer to the element common in all religions by the term universal religion and this common element according to him consisted in the simple non-idolatrous worship of a single God. Its inculcation did not mean the abolition of all religions but rather the purification of these religions from within by the removal of such practises as conflicted with devotion to God and the welfare of man.

Pandit Sivanath Sastri thus summed up Roy's vision of universal religion in 1910 in the citation which follows in which the

Theistic Church of India is the English rendering for Brahmo Samaj[50] :

> The Theistic Church of India, has a great and glorious mission as far as this country is concerned—namely to fuse in a bond of spiritual union the conflicting claims of Hinduism, Mahomedanism and Christianity, by laying insistence on their universal aspects; for certainly that was the grand ideal before the mind of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the founder of Brahmo Samaj. Reformers like Nanak, Kabir and Chaitanya aspired to fuse together Hinduism and Mahomedanism, the two conflicting faiths with which they came in contact. But Ram Mohun Roy went further. The study of the three religions, Hinduism, Mahomedanism and Christianity, convinced him that there was a common element that unites them all, and he was also convinced that a universal Theistic Church could be organised on those common lines. The formation of the Brahmo Samaj was a result of that conviction.

V

How did Roy's concept of universal religion and his efforts to promote it fare in the light of later history ? We need to remind ourselves at this point that Roy, through the Brahmo Samaj or 'Society of God' had 'hoped to transform radically the face of Hindu life and religion. Although he intended the Samaj to be a society of true worshippers of the one God of all religions, *in actual practice it turned out to be a congregation of Hindu theists.* No images, status or paintings were allowed in the hall of worship. No sacrifices or oblations of any kind were permitted, and only monotheistic services, prayers and hymns were allowed. An innovation was the introduction of congregational worship. Among the prominent Hindus who joined the Brahmo Samaj were Devendranath Tagore, and Keshab Chandra Sen and for some time the society gained strength among the intellectuals of Bengal.'[51]

The course of the movement, however, in many ways ran counter to its universalistic aspirations. Firstly, only the Hindu theists responded. Secondly, the movement even drifted away from the mainstream of Hinduism. Roy 'like many other religious

reformers, had claimed that he was not starting a new sect, but only purifying the old religion. There were elements in Rammohan's thought, however, that made it virtually certain that the Brahmo Samaj would separate itself from the main stream of Hinduism. His rejection of the use of idols in worship, his attachment to eighteenth century rationalism, his disbelief in transmigration, all ran counter to traditional Hinduism.'[52] Thirdly, not only did the society not become universal in the sense of reaching beyond the Hindus and even within Hinduism became virtually a sect, its universal aspirations were further compromised when it suffered two major schisms—one in 1865 and the other in 1878.[53]

It is, therefore, the height of irony that a movement which started out as a universal movement in one sense should be doublefaulted by Frithjof Schuon in the following passage[54] for virtually not being universal in another sense, when it is viewed from the standpoint of Hindu orthodoxy :

> What makes the definition of orthodoxy rather troublesome is that it presents two principal modes, the one essential or intrinsic, and the other formal or extrinsic : the latter is being in accord with a revealed form, and the former being in accord with the essential and universal truth, with or without being in accord with any particular form, so that the two modes sometimes stand opposed externally. To give an example, it can be said that Buddhism is extrinsically heterodox in relation to Hinduism, because it marks a departure from the basic forms of the latter, and at the same time intrinsically orthodox, because it is in accord with that universal truth from which both traditions proceed; on the other hand, the Brahmo-Samaj, like every other variety of 'progressive' neo-Hinduism, is doubly heterodox, first in relation to Hinduism itself and secondly in relation to truth unqualified; heterodox, therefore, both from the particular point of view of form and from the universal point of view of the essence.

In a word, the universalistic aspirations of Roy remained unrealized.

Notes and References

1. Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition,* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 19-20.
2. Ainslie T. Embree, ed., *The Hindu Tradition,* (New York : Random House, 1972), p. 278.
3. V.S. Naravane, *Modern Indian Thought* (New Delhi : Orient Longman Limited, 1978), pp. 27-28.
4. Satis Chandra Chakravarti, ed., *The Father of Modern India : Commemoration Volume of the Rammohun Roy Centenary Celebrations, 1933* (Calcutta : Rammohun Roy Centenary Committee, 1935), Part II, p. 15.
5. Dilip Kumar Biswas and Prabhat Chandra Ganguli, eds., Sophia Dobson Collet, *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy* (Calcutta : Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, 1962), pp. 496-97.
6. Quoted in Satis Chandra Chakravarti, *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 91.
7. *Ibid.*, Part II, p. 105.
8. Quoted in U.N. Ball, *Rammohun Roy* (Calcutta : Ray, 1933), pp. 12-13. U.N. Ball thinks Roy was fourteen at the time (*Ibid.*, p. 13).
9. Dilip Kumar Biswas and Prabhat Chandra Ganguli, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 497.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 498.
11. Quoted in U.N. Ball, *op. cit.*, p. 19, V. 3. Naravane already sees the seed of the idea of a universal religion germinating here (*op. cit.*, p. 28) but Sir Brajendranath Seal is of the opinion that he was still far from reaching the universalistic position one finds in his 'prefaces to the Vedanga abridgement and translations.' (Satis Chandra Chakrabarti, *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 101).
12. Quoted in U.N. Ball, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
14. Quoted in Theodore de Bary, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 23.
15. U.N. Ball, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
17. See W.M. Theodore de Bary, ed., Vol. II, p. 22; U.N. Ball, *op. cit.*, p. 59; etc.
17. U.N. Ball, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
18. Quoted in W. Theodore de Bary, ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 23-24.
19. U.N. Ball, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-12.
20 Satis Chandra Chakravarti, ed., *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 103.
21. See W. Theodore de Bary. ed., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 22-23 : 'I hope it will not be presumed, that I intend to establish the preference of my faith over that of other men. The result of controversy on such a subject, however multiplied, must be ever unsatisfactory. For the reasoning faculty which leads men to certainty in things within its reach produces no effect on questions beyond its comprehension. I do no more than assert that if correct reasoning and the dictates of common sense induce the belief of a wise, uncreated Being who is the supporter and ruler of the boundless universe, we should also consider him, the most powerful and supreme existence,—far surpassing our powers of comprehension or description. And although men of uncultivated minds and even some learned individuals (but in this one point

blinded by prejudice) readily choose as the object of their adoration any thing which they can always see and which they pretend to feed, the absurdity of such conduct is not, thereby, in the least degree diminished.' Also see *Ibid.*, p. 28 : 'It is unjust in the Christian to quarrel with Hindoos because (he says) they cannot comprehend the sublime mastery of his religion [the Doctrine of the Trinity]; since he is equally unable to comprehend the sublime mysteries of ours, and since both these mysteries equally transcend the human understanding, one cannot be preferred to the other.'

22. Dilip Kumar Biswas and Prabhat Chandra Ganguli, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 469-70.
23. See V.S. Naravane, *op. cit.*, p. 27-28, wherein while discussing the issues he makes three statements which may be similar but are not the same : (a) that Roy was contemplating a universal religion; (b) that Roy was asserting the idea of 'the fundamental unity of all religions'; and (c) that, Roy, according to Shiv Nath Shastri propounded 'the doctrine (that) the one true God is the universal element in all religions and such forms an article of faith of the universal religion of mankind. But the practical applications of that universal religion are to be always local and national.'
24. See Dilip Kumar Biswas and Prabhat Chandra Ganguli, eds., *op. cit.*, Appendix X, p. 505.
25. Satis Chandra Chakravarti, ed., *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 105.
26. See Dilip Kumar Biswas and Prabhat Chandra Ganguli. eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 505-06.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 507.
28. Actually Roy once said as much, 'Just before he had set out for Europe, the Rajah told his friends that on his death each sect, the Christian, the Hindu and the Mahommedan, would respectively claim him to be of their persuation; but he expressly declared that he belonged to none of them. His prediction has been fully realized. No sooner did he depart this life, than the subject of his religious opinions became an apple of discord.' (Satis Chandra Chakravarti, ed., *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 167).
29. See Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., p. 21; Ainslie T. Embree, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 284-88.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
31. Dilip Kumar Biswas and Prabhat Chandra Ganguli, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 361. See *Bhagavadgita* VIII. 13.
32. See R.C. Majumdar, H.C. Raychaudhuri and Kalikinkar Datta, *An Advanced History of India* (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1967), pp. 806-809.
33. Satis Chandra Chakravarti, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 169.
34. Dilip Kumar Biswas and Prabhat Chandra Ganguli, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 369.
35. Satis Chandra Chakravarti, ed., *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 105.
36. Dilip Kumar Biswas and Prabbat Chandra Ganguli, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 369-70.
37. U.S. Naravane, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.
38 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

39. Dilip Kumar Biswas and Prabhat Chandra Ganguli, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 273-74.
40. Satis Chandra Chakravarti, ed , *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 101, emphasis added.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
45. *Ibid.*, Part II, p. 103.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Satis Chandra Chakravarti, ed., *op. cit.*, Part II, p. 168.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid*, pp. 168-69.
50. Pandit Sivanath Sastri, *The Mission of the Brahmo Samaj* (Calcutta : Brahmo Mission Press, 1910), pp. 1-2.
51. Benjamin Walker, *The Hindu World*, Vol. II, (New York; Frederick A. Praegar, 1968), p. 311, emphasis added.
52. Ainslie T. Embree, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 280. This should not be taken to imply that the movement did not exert a salutary influence of Hinduism (*Ibid.*).
53. R.C. Majumdar, et. al., *op. cit.*, pp. 872-75. For a fuller account see Sivanath Sastri, *History of the Brahmo Samaj* (Calcutta : R. Chatterjee, 1919). For an even more detailed account see Prosanto Kumar Sen, *Biography of a New Faith* (Calcutta : Thacker, Spink & Co., 1933).
54. Frithjof Schuon, *Language of the Self* (Madras : Ganesh, 1959), p. 1. I am indebted to Hary Oldmeadow for this reference.

9

RAM MOHUN ROY ON SATI AND SEXISM

CROMWELL CRAWFORD*

Ram Mohun Roy is known best but understood least for his reforms in the area of sati. The purpose of this paper is first to make a thorough historical investigation of his role in the abolition of sati; and secondly, to understand his legacy for the woman's movement as an original opponent of masculine sexism.

1. SATI

Sati (Anglicised as suttee) is a feminine noun made from the verbal root *sat*, meaning truth. A sati was therefore a widow who was considered true and virtuous because she allowed herself to be burnt upon the funeral pile of her husband (rarely, she took poison or was buried alive). A change in the above meaning of virtuous wife came about when Christian missionaries incorrectly referred to the act of self-immolation itself as sati.

Vedic literature suggests that during its times sati was a "mimetic ceremony" (M. and J. Stutley, 1977 : 273). The Atharva Veda declares : "Get up, O Woman, to the world of the living; thou liest by this one who is deceased; come ! to him who grasps thy hand, thy second spouse, thou hast now entered into the relation of wife to husband," (XVIII-I in Hastings *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XI : 207). Both here and in the Rig

* Cromwell Crawford is Professor at the Department of Religion, University of Hawaii, Hawaii 968 22.

Veda, (X.XVIII. 8, Hastings *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XI : 207) the widow ascends the funeral pyre of her dead husband as part of her "ancient duty", but although she lies by the corpse of her husband, she is told to rise and go forth with her new spouse to a life of "progeny and property." Once she departs, the pyre is set ablaze. Thus, the Vedic Indians ceremonialised an earlier custom enjoining widows to cremate themselves with their dead husbands.

By about the sixth century, the ancient custom was revived in areas where Brahmanic influence was dominant—along the Ganges. Bengal, Oudh and Rajputana (X.XVIII. 8, in Hastings *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IX). In the opinion of R.W. Frazer, the custom was revived under the pressure of priests "anxious to obtain command over the property of the widow. In order to give the custom a religious sanction, a passage in the *Rigveda* which directed the widow to rise from her husband's funeral pyre and go forth in front (*agre*) was altered into go into the fire (*agneh*) (X.XVIII. 8, in Hasting's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XI).

Though sanctified by age and priestly self-interest, sati was never universally practised. It was rare in parts of Punjab, and was prohibited in most sections of the south (X.XVIII.8 in Hasting's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XI).

During the Moghul period, the custom was "frowned upon," (Smith, 1967 : 454) but it was never completely prohibited for fear of alienating the Hindu subjects. As Muslim power declined, the practice was revived. "In areas exposed to Western influence, such as Bengal proper, or otherwise exposed to a high degree of social flux, such as the Banaras region under the newly risen Rajas of Banaras, sati became a popular custom," (Ray, 1975 : 3). In the Madras Presidency, during the second decade of the 19th century, the practice was only known in the Telegu area and in parts of Tanjore. In the Bombay Presidency, the rite was limited to the Konkan district. Only in the Bengal Presidency was the popularity of the custom truly felt, particularly in Calcutta and the neighbourring districts of Burdwan, Hooghly, Nadia and the 24 Parganas. Almost 60 per cent of all satis in the Presidency between the years 1815 to 1826 came from these localities.

At first it might seem strange that sati was most popular in areas most directly affected by the British impact. The fact is that

the British establishment provided new opportunities for upward social mobility. These opportunities were seized by the urbanites who became rich by the system; but in the midst of doing *puja* to Mammon, they lost a good deal of their traditional virtues and social standing. Sati provided the *nouveaux riches* with a means of demonstrating their allegiance to the older norms from which life in the city had seduced them. This explains "why even when the family of the suicide was prosecuted, there was no loss of caste, infamy or disgrace : they in fact gained in social stature and were 'backed with applause and honour.' Duress exerted on the prospective sati was therefore a demonstration of the piety of the family. No wonder, the practitioners of the rite were most ruthless with the widow who after making the fatal decision to commit sati later wavered (Ray, 1975 : 173).

Other factors which helped popularise sati at this time were the economic motive which was brought home to Ram Mohun with the immolation of his sister-in-law once the family suffered financial reversals; and allied to this was the manipulation of family property, to which Ram Mohun also alludes. Property rules gave, wives and mothers a certain stake in the distribution of property. In competitive times, "where there was a high chance that a widow would inherit property or use it for bargaining purposes," these privileges were deemed dangerous (Ray, 1975). The safest and most sanctimonious way of avoiding this danger was to persuade surviving wives to blaze a path of virtue ! Ram Mohun clearly saw through this proprietary greed behind the high incidence of sati and drew the attention of the Governor-General to it in his *Appeal.*

In the face of the popularisation of this rite, the British found themselves in a touchy situation where they had to respect the religious and social liberties of their subjects, or else they would be courting unrest and rebellion.

The great service of Ram Mohun was to show the rulers how this dilemma which had baffled for upwards of a quarter century could be resolved. In order to appreciate both the wisdom and courage of this service, we must set it in its historical context.

Warren Hastings authorised the preparation of a manual of Hindu law for magistrates in order to avoid any infringement of the declared policy of religious liberty. The Brahmin pandits who had a free hand in composing this document made sure that the

custom of sati was given full veneration and thereby assured its protection by government. The government accepted the custom on the terms of these authorities, but the ensuing policy of non-interference brought the administration into a collision course with the Evangelicals both at home and abroad. Often eagerness to give Ram Mohun all the credit for ending sati makes historians overlook the daring and dedicated efforts of the Christian missionaries. William Carey of Serampore deserves special recognition for his courageous efforts to stop sati.

Despite the hands-off policy of the government, Britishers acting in individual capacities took it upon themselves to follow their conscience. There is the case of captain Tomeyn who, in 1772, rescued a widow from burning and thereby stirred up a riot. In 1789, M.H. Brooke, a Collector of Shahabad, refused permission for concremation, defending his position before Lord Cornwallis in the following words :

> The rites and superstitions of the Hindu religion should be allowed with the most unqualified tolerance, but a practice at which human nature shudders, I cannot permit within the limits of my jurisdiction without particular instructions (Collet, 1962 : 79).

The instructions Collector Brooke received from the Governor-General was to refrain from any show of force in preventing future satis inasmuch as "the public prohibition of a ceremony, authorized by the tenets of the religion of the Hindus, and from the observance of which they have never been restricted by the ruling power, would in all probability tend rather to increase than diminish their veneration for it, and consequently prove the means of rendering it more prevalent than it is at present." (Collet, 1962).

The government could not maintain its neutrality very long. There were atrocious incidents in which young widows were drugged into performing sati, or where gullible victims of greedy relatives and priests. The government, therefore, decided to bring the custom under strict supervision without violating the principle of non-interference.

In a latter dated February 5, 1805, Lord Wallesley requested the Sadar Nizamat Adalat (chief judicial authority in India) to

herself, the pandits stated that she could be restored to society "by undergoing a penance, (Ahmed, 1965).

In 1817, the Nizamat Adalat collated all of the regulations in a minutely worked out form which was then to be released for publication, but the administration changed its mind upon discovering that co-terminus with its efforts to control sati, incidents jumped significantly, especially in the Calcutta Division. Statistics of sati for the years 1815 to 1818 showed an ominous trend, soaring from a total of 378 to 2,365 in three years. Calcutta led with a hike from 253 to 1,528 (Collet, 1962 : 84).

Reasons given by the British law officers for the upswing in the Calcutta area were : (1) the influence of the worship of Kali—"the idol of the drunkard and the thief"; (2) the masochistic enjoyment of pyromaniacs; (3) and the lending of respectability to the custom by government supervision. Local officials considered the last factor embarrassing to British humanitarianism for it amounted to "granting the authority of the Government for burning widows." and therefore culpability in its increase (Collet. 1962 : 86).

British policy did not change throughout the rules of Hastings and Amherst, but during this time foundations were being laid on which Bentinck could later take his stand.

First, there was Mrityunjay Vidyalankar, Chief Pandit of the Supreme Court, ranking Hindu scholar and formidable advocate of Hindu orthodoxy, Commissioned by the Chief Judge of the Sadar Diwani Adalat to determine the precise measure in which sati is supported by the *sastras*, this colossus of Hindu dharma produced some surprising findings. He stated that scriptural injunctions apply only to those who feel the pain of disease or separation; who act voluntarily; and that the "act of dying is not enjoined; but merely the mode of it." If you are bent on suicide, say the scriptures, "put an end to yourself by such and such means. . .(Ahmed, 1965 : 112).

For his part, Vidyalankar recommended "a life of abstinence and chastity" as more "highly excellent" than the woman burning herself (Ahmed, 1965).

The second great figure of this time was Ram Mohun Roy. He was certainly reinforced in his own thinking by the scholarly opinions of Vidyalankar.

The Raja's anti-sati campaign began in 1811-12 while stationed in Rangpur. The fiery death of his sister-in-law (1812) forged in

him a determination to save all the sisters of his land from this unworthy rite. Among his early efforts he used to frequent the cremation grounds in the Calcutta area in order to dissuade women who were about to sacrifice their lives. The *Asiatic Journal* reports that on one occasion he got the priests to light the fire prior to the woman ascending the pile, hoping that the flames would intimidate her. He insisted that this procedure was directed by the scriptures. Contrary to this expectation, one of the wives courageously walked into the flames and was followed by the second. As she stood before the flames, she addressed the bystanders with great animation : "You have just seen my husband's first wife perform the duty incumbent on her, and will now see me follow her example. Henceforward, I pray, do not attempt to prevent Hindu women from burning, otherwise our curse will be upon you" (*Asiatic Journal*, 1818 : 290-91).

The reformer was not deterred. Such incidents spurred his zeal to have the practice banned. He probably had a hand in drawing up a document signed by a great number of reputable Hindus in Calcutta. This was a counter-petition to one presented by the orthodox community asking the government to repeal all regulations as infringements upon their religious liberties. Ram Mohun's faction charged that,

> cases have frequently occurred, where women have been induced by the persuasions of their next heirs, interested in their destruction, to burn themselves on the funeral piles of their husbands; that others, who have been induced by fear to retract a resolution, rashly expressed in the first moments of grief, of burning with their deceased husbands, have been forced upon the pile, and there bound down with ropes, and pressed by green bamboos until consumed by the flames, have been carried back by their relations and burnt to death. All these instances, your petitioners humbly submit, are murders, according to every shastur, as well as to common sense of all nations (Majumdar ed., 1941 : 115, 116).

Aware of the government's concern for religious liberty, the petitioners further point out that sati has little basis in scripture. To the contrary, "in the opinion of many of the most learned Brahmins, founded upon their shasturs, all kinds of voluntary

death are prohibited (Majumdar ed., 1941 : 117). Manu, the Vedanta, the Gita and the Smrtis are cited in support. In addition, the humanitarian legislations of the British government are both cited and invoked. Just as the law banned such inhumane practices as female infanticide, the hope is expressed that government will intervene to bring the evils of sati to a speedy end.

In 1818, Ram Mohun published a Bengali tract entitled, *A Conference between an Advocate for, and an Opponent of the Practice of Burning Widows Alive.* An English translation was also made in the hopes that its arguments "might tend to alter the notions that some European gentlemen entertain on this subject" (Nag and Burman ed., 1947, pt : 111 : 88). The reference here is to the protection of religious rights in a situation where religious claims are erroneously accepted. The whole argument of this tract is conducted on a moral plane.

First, the Advocate of concremation and postcremation (*anumaran*) of widows lists several sacred lawgivers—Angira, Vyasa, Harita, Vishnu, Gotama—enjoining sati.

The Opponent accepts these injunctions but points out that whereas the scriptures are written on different levels to cater to the moral development of diverse individuals, we must finally evaluate the lesser moral injunctions by the higher ones. Manu is the most un-impeachable witness of moral law. Therefore, the commands of Angira and the like must be judged in the light of Manu. And on the authority of the great lawgiver, widows are enjoined to pass their days cheerfully by living a life of simplicity and virtue.

Furthermore, every act is qualified by the motivation. The driving force behind concremation is always some form of sensual gratification. Such virtue has its own reward; but being the product of selfish desire, it sooner or later is dissipated. Rites, dutifully performed, may bring one to the celestial abode of the gods, but when merit is exhausted, one is again subjected to birth, disease and death. Therefore, instead of seeking the pleasures of transient heaven, one should have faith in the Supreme Being which leads to absorption, and from which there is no returning to this life of suffering. Such is the testimony of the Upanishads.

Having been routed on the grounds of scripture, the Advocate takes shelter in tradition. The Opponent dislodges him here, too, first by showing that the custom is relatively recent; and secondly, by demonstrating that because a vice has become a custom there is

time did he allow threat of harm to adjust conviction to circumstance. Earlier, he had written to an American Unitarian that he was prepared to stick by the precepts of Jesus "even at the risk of my own life." Now he was proving it.

On the brighter side, reactions of the English press were supportive of his campaign. The new media welcomed the above tract "from the pen of the virtuous Reformer of India," and gave it all possible publicity (Majumdar ed., 1941 : 114). Said the *Calcutta Gazette* (December 24, 1818) :

> The Sanskrit authorities which are said to enjoin the sacrifice of widows on the funeral pile of their deceased husbands, have lately undergone a free examination by a learned and philosophical Hindoo. The question of itself is of the highest importance, and the true interpretation of the religious law which has stained the domestic history of India for so many ages with blood, will no doubt diminish, if not extinguish the desire for self-immolation. The safest way of coming to a right understanding on a point so interesting to humanity, is a rigid investigation of the rules of conduct laid down in the books which are considered sacred by the Hindoos. This appears to have been done with great assiduity, anxiety, and care, and the consequence has been a decision hostile to the ancient custom (Majumdar ed., 1941).

Fourteen months later, Ram Mohun produced a *Second Conference* (February 20, 1820) three times the length of the *First*. It is dedicated to the marchioness of Hastings, from which we gather that he had the full backing of the Governor-General. The fact is that Hastings and his successors were hoping that the impasse in which they found themselves in respect to sati would be lifted by the labours of Ram Mohun and other natives whose enlightened thinking on the subject would finally place the custom in a state of desuetude.

The tack of the *First Conference* is followed in the *Second*, but with a plethora of scriptural quotations reinforced by moral arguments. In our discussion of sexism we shall focus on his defense of Hindu women in section IX.

The stir created by these publications was phenomenal. "They served to arouse public interest on the question of *sati* on a scale hitherto unthinkable. Public discussion on the subject was taken

up by the vernacular newspapers which had begun to appear after 1818" (Ahmed, 1965 : 113, 114). The *Samachar Darpan* and the *Sambad Kaumudi* were active campaigners, often clashing with the *Samachar Chandrika* which was pro-sati. The liberal voice of the English press could be heard through the columns of the *Friend of India*, the *India Gazette*, the *Bengal Hurkaru*, and the *Calcutta Journal*.

Ram Mohun's treatment of sati in his literary works and newspaper publications is quite characteristic of the reformer. He condemned sati on moral grounds and on the basis of those very scriptures which were held, sacred by his opponents. Thus, taking the position that true Hinduism is both moral and rational, he was able to move with the winds of liberalism which were blowing from the West.

Lord Wellesly felt a stirring of these winds and responded by suppressing infanticide on Saugor island in 1803, but skirted the issue of sati for fear of Hindu reprisal. For the next twenty-five years, the winds lay low with each Governor-General hoping that the spread of education and the "unostentatious exertions" of local officers, the problem would die a natural death (Ballhatchet, 1957 : 275). Metcalf, in Delhi, was the only exception. The quarter century concluded with the caution of W.B. Bayley against trying to dig up "inveterate religious prejudices" so deeply rooted in antiquity (Minute, dated Jan, 13, 1827). A year later, the restless winds of liberalism began to blow again. In 1828, Lord William Bentinck, a portege of Jeremy Bentham, was appointed Governor-General. "In 1829, Bentinck acted where others had called for reports and suppressed suttee by Regulation XVII of 1829" (Smith, 1967 : 648).

Bentinck moved fast, but he was no bull in a china shop. He first gathered useful data from key persons. In July of 1829, he contacted Ram Mohun. The *Calcutta Monthly Journal* reports : "An eminent native philanthropist, who has long taken the lead of his countrymen on this great question of humanity and civilized government, has been encouraged to submit his views on it in a written form, and has been subsequently honoured with an audience by the Governor-General (Majumdar ed., 1941 : 138).

Ram Mohun helped Bentinck's decision by breaking the moral deadlock which had stymied earlier administrators the deadlock between the principle of life and the principle of liberty.

Ram Mohun convincingly demonstrated to the government that the custom they had pledged themselves to protect in the name of religious liberty was "nowhere enjoined as a duty; and that a life of piety and self-abnegation was considered more virtuous" (Sastri, 1935 : 22).

On the practical side he also gave convincing testimony that the motives behind the proponents of sati were often less inspired by creed as by greed. The poor, defenseless creature upon the funeral pile might have been prayed for, but, in truth, she was preyed upon.

Thus, on the grounds of scripture and morality Ram Mohun showed the Governor-General that the elimination of sati could not amount to an infringement of religious freedom. The only remaining issue was the right of life. All of the considerations are reflected in Bentincks Preamble to the sati Regulation of December 4, 1829.

> The practice of sutte, or of burning or burying alive the widows of Hindoos, is revolving to the feelings of human nature; it is nowhere enjoined by the religion of the Hindoos as an imperative duty; on the contrary, a life of purity and retirement on the part of the widow is more especially and preferable inculcated, and by a vast majority of that people throughout India the practice is not kept up nor observed : in some extensive districts it does not exist; in those in which it has been most frequent, it is notorious that, in many instances, acts of atrocity have been perpetrated which have been shocking to the Hindoos themselves, and in their eyes unlawful and wicked. The measures hitherto adopted to discourage and prevent such acts have failed of success, and the Governor-General in Council is deeply impressed with the conviction that the abuses in question cannot be effectually put to an end without abolishing the practice altogether. Actuated by these considerations, the Governor-General in Council, without intending to depart from one of the first and most important principles of the system of British government in India, that all classes of the people be secure in the observance of their religious usages, so long as that system can be adhered to without violation of the paramount dictates of justice and humanity, has deemed it right to establish the following rules,

which are hereby enacted to be in force from the time of their promulgation throughout the territories immediately subject to the presidency of Fort William (Majumdar ed., 1941 : 153, 154).

Let us now take a brief look at Bentham's Minute on sati, dated November 8, 1829. Our purpose is to show how the Governor-General differed from Ram Mohun in the execution of their common goals.

Of all the people whose device he sought against the abolition of sati, Bentinck refers to Mr. Horace Wilson, the Orientalist, and to Ram Mohun Roy. He reports Wilson as saying that abolition will incur "extensive dissatisfaction" and that its "success will only be partial." Bentinck agrees with the first, but doubts the latter. He acknowledges that "a similar opinion as to the probable excitation of a deep distrust of our future intentions, was mentioned to me in conversation by that enlightened native. Ram Mohun Roy, a warm advocate for the abolition of suttees, and of all other superstitions and corruptions, engrafted on the Hindoo Religion, which he considers originally to have been a pure Deism" (Majumdar ed., 1941).

Ram Mohun had recommended that the practice be suppressed by the quiet and unobtrusive enforcement of regulations, with law officers standing chiefly in the background. "He apprehended that any public enactment would give rise to general apprehension that the reasoning would be. While the English were contending for power, they deemed it politic to allow universal toleration, and to respect our religion, but having obtained the supremacy their first act is a violation of their professions, and the next will probably be, like the Mahommedan conquerors, to force upon us their own Religion" (Majumdar ed., 1941).

Bentinck admits that "much truth is contained in these remarks" but strongly dissents. He then inquires into the evil, and the extent of danger which may practically result from abolition. He concludes that "from the native population, nothing of extensive combination or even partial opposition may be expected from the abolition" (Majumdar ed., 1941 : 145).

The reformer was correct in his apprehensions. Historians Biswas and Ganguli point out that "the abrupt abolition of the evil custom of Sati came to be regarded by masses of conservative

Hindus and even by Muslims exactly in the same light he feared. This sentiment among others served as a powerful motive force behind the Mutiny of 1857" (Collet, 1962 : 258).

It is to the Raja's credit that once Bentinck had cut "the Gordian knot," he fully aligned himself with Government policy. He helped mobilise favourable public opinion and closely briefed the government on community developments.

The orthodox community reacted with stunned dismay, but there was no resort to violence. Their activities were limited to closing their ranks, publicising the injustice they felt perpetrated upon them, and preparing petitions to countervail the new regulation.

On January 14, 1830, the conservative community of Calcutta presented the Governor-General with a Petition against the sati Regulation. Attached was a paper of "Authorities" signed by 120 pandits. Twenty-eight pandits appended their signatures to an additional paper of legal authorities presented by a deputation from the interior.

The petitioners charged that their religion had been betrayed by apostates who had been instrumental in shaping governmental policy. In fact, "under the sanction of immemorial usage as well as precept, Hindoo widows perform, of their own accord and pleasure, and for the benefit of their husbands' souls and for their own, the sacrifice of self-immolation called suttee, which is not merely a sacred *duty* but a high privilege to her who sincerely believes in the doctrine of their religion" (Majumdar ed., 1941 : 156). The sati Regulation is, therefore, tantamount to interference in matters of religion and "an unjust and intolerant dictation in matters of conscience," which is bound to fail (Majumdar ed., 1941).

Instead of relying on the "assertion of men who have neither any faith nor care for the memory of their ancestors of their religion," his Lordship is asked to consult "none but pundits and brahmins, and teachers of holy lives, and known learning and authority" (Majumdar ed., 1941 : 157).

The Petition was signed by Maharaj Shree Grischunder Bahadur and 800 other persons.

Following a conference on the subject of the Petition, Bentinck delivered the following reply :

The Governor-General has read with attention the petition which has been presented to him; and has some satisfaction in observing that the opinions confirm the supposition that widows are not, by the religious writings of the Hindoos, commanded to destroy themselves, but that, upon the death of their husbands, the choice of a life of a strict and severe morality is everywhere expressly offered; that in the books usually considered of the highest authority, it is commanded above every other course, and is stated to be adapted to a better state of society; such as, by the Hindoos, is believed to have subsisted in former times.

Thus, none of the Hindoos are placed in the distressing situation of having to disobey either the ordinances of the government or those of their religion (Majumdar ed., 1941 : 162, 3).

The voice of Ram Mohun can very clearly be heard in Bentinck's argument. He concludes that the abolition of sati is "an urgent duty of the British government," and therefore denies the prayer. The Petitioners are assured that they have further legal recourse by appealing to the King in Council.

Two days later, January 16, 1830, the Governor-General was presented with congratulatory addresses—one from the Christians of Calcutta bearing 800 signatures, and one from 300 native gentlemen. The latter was presented by Ram Mohun. The opening paragraph expresses thanks for the invaluable protection which his Lordship's government has offered to the lives of the Hindu females. and for his humane and successful exertions in rescuing the Indians "from the gross stigma hitherto attached to our character, as wilful murderers of females and zealous promoters of the practice of suicide" (Collet, 1962 : 464).

"Excessive jealousy" is cited as the progenitor of this custom with Hindu princes as the culprits. Under the cloak of religion, they used their arbitrary power to sanction widow burning so as to prevent their wives from "forming subsequent attachments." The system, "being admirably suited to the selfish and servile disposition of the populace, has been eagerly followed by them, in defiance of the most sacred authorities" (Collet, 1962 : 466).

The Hindu Address, and Bentinck's reply bring to light a concern with international opinion that motivated Ram Mohun

and his supporters. There is also the recognition, which Ram Mohun perceived very early in his career as reformer, that the Hindus were blessed by a moral character that was capable of giving a much nobler account of itself. In the words of the Englishman :

> Those who present this Address are right in supposing that, by every nation in the world, except at Hindoos themselves, this part of their custom has always been made a reproach against them, and nothing so strongly contrasted with the better features of their own national character, so inconsistent with the affections which unite families, so destructive of the moral principles on which society is founded, has ever subsisted amongst a people, in other respects so civilized (Collet, 1962 : 466, 7).

In the meantime, the orthodox Hindus became fully aware that a long, hard fight lay ahead of them, and that they must form an organization to protect their religion. Accordingly, in January of 1830, the Dharma Sabha was formed as a "means for protecting our religion and our excellent customs and usages" (Majumdar ed., 1941 : 163). The Dharma Sabha's relationship to the government was ambiguous. On the one hand it stood as the orthodox watch-dog of governmental encroachments; on the other, it made good use of government patronage. One of the first items of business of the fledgling organization was to look into the matter of making an appeal to the King of England relative to the regulations forbidding satis.

In the same year, Ram Mohun published a tract, *Abstract of the Argumenis Recording the Burning of Widows Considered as a Religious Rite.* Though sati was now officially outlawed, nevertheless it seemed desirable to Ram Mohun that "the substance of those publications should be condensed in a concise but comprehensive manner, so that enquirers may with little difficulty, be able to form a just conclusion, as to the true light in which this practice is viewed in the religion of the Hindus" (Nag and Burman eds., 1947 : 131).

First, sati is at best optional, not obligatory. Manu plainly enjoins widows to "*contirue till death* forgiving all injuries, performing austere duties, avoiding every sensual pleasure, and cheerfully

practising the incomparable rules of virtue which have been followed by such women as were devoted to one only husband." Further, should concremation be made into an obligatory duty, it "would necessarily bring a stigma upon the character of the living widows, who have preferred a virtuous life to Concremation, as charging them with a violation of the duty said to be indispensible" (Nag and Burman eds., 1947 : 132).

Secondly, the practice of sati is not of equal merit as the living of a virtuous life. The Vedas decisively state : "From a desire, during life, of future fruition life ought not to be destroyed." (Nag and Burman eds., 1947). Support for concremation is found in Angira, Vyasa, Harita and others, but these authors recommend concremation "to obtain future carnal fruition." The Bhagavad Gita condemns such rites performed for fruition. The Gita's position is supported by Manu, Yajnavalkya and Smartta Raghunandana, a modern expounder of Law in Bengal.

The third point touches on the mode of concremation. Where the rite is prescribed in scripture, the ascent of the widow on the funeral pile of her husband is always a voluntary act, allowing her ample scope for the last minute retraction which can later be absolved by offering penance.

We can feel the lifting of a tremendous moral burden as Ram Mohun concludes his tract with these thanks to Heaven for protecting women from "cruel murder, under the cloak of religion," and the character of Indians, as a people, "from contempt and pity" by all civilized nations (Nag and Burman eds., 1947 : 136).

By June 1832, the orthodox Hindus petitioned the Privy Council in England against the sati Regulation, but their prayer was not granted. Reactions to the dismissal of the case did not explode in hostility, but became occasions for expressing disenchantment with the government. Bitter feelings also ran high against Ram Mohun, the devil in the pile.

Looking back over this long campaign, the man who stands out as a Goliath among the governors is William Bentinck. Whereas his peers wrote Minutes, Bentinck made history. As a humanitarian and Utilitarian, he was of the firm conviction that the inhumane rite of sati had no place in the moral order of society.

This is the point at which the great moral reformer enters the picture. Without his consultation, the government's solution to the problem could at best have been coercive—a military action. Ram

Mohun helped make it presuasive a moral action. The Hindu scholar showed convincingly that the moral action he appealed for was rooted in the authoritative scriptures of the Hindus. The sting was thus taken out of the charge that the British were military meddling in religious affairs. To the contrary, Ram Mohun so elevated the British intervention that the arm of the law looked like the arm of the Lord !

November 10, 1832, a meeting of the Brahmo Samaj of Calcutta was held at which time it was decided to send an address of congratulations to His Majesty, King of England, because the abolitation of sati by the Indian Government had been confirmed by the Privy Council in England. As a gesture of honour, it was voted that Ram Mohun be entrusted with the task of presenting the address to the King. It was also moved, "that as the Raja had devoted much labour to this matter, thanks were likewise due to him. The motion was seconded. . . and agreed to by all with great satisfaction" (Majumdar ed., 1941 : 204).

Today, there is less unanimity as to who was finally responsible for the defeat of sati—Roy or Raj ? The above discussion demonstrates the futility of this question. "The fact remains that Roy was an embodiment of the anti-sati-movement to both the anti-sati and pro-sati groups as well as to the British rulers. And, it was only he who provided a consistent explanation of the practice and a theory of reform which could be understood by all these three groups (Nandy, 1975 : 169).

2. MASCULINE SEXISM

Sati is dead but its ghost lives on in the form of masculine sexism. It is to the credit of Ram Mohun's reforming instincts that he not only tackled the overt aspects of sati, but traced it to its roots in sexism. Social analysis define sexism as :

The mastery of men over women on the basis of the privileges that they see in their manhood. . . . a masculine pride in one's own sex, favouring the special characteristics of masculinity in culture, the conviction that these characteristics are fundamentally of a biological nature and therefore are determined, combined with the depreciation of women to the "weaker sex," the devaluing of presumed "feminine" attributes, and the exclusion of women from full

participation in the life of society (Moltmann and Meeks, 1978 : 312).

Sexism is a group phenomenon Males justify themselves by the characteristics of their male sexuality. To be fully human is, primarily, to be male; females are not completely evolved. The sexist self-image is therefore negative and aggressive : "A man defines himself by saying that he is 'not a woman' and by not allowing himself to be 'feminine,' as in all sorts of fraternal organizations (Moltmann and Meeks, 1928).

Sexism is also the weaponry employed for dominating women through psychological warfare. The total upbringing of a female in a patriarchal society is aimed at developing in her a dependency on the opposite sex. She has a uniqueness all of her own, but it is biologically defined as wife and mother. This, in turn, provides the framework for her role and status which is domestically understood.

The biological legitimation of sexism is only one side of the coin; the other is theological. God himself is conceived in the image of man, whereas woman is the temptress. Man is therefore given charge over her, so that by his wise protection the "weaker vessel" will come to good.

Ram Mohun does not use the word "sexism," but the social and psychological acuity with which he describes male dominance renders his analysis refreshingly up-to-date.

He points out that for the Hindu male, the full meaning of humanity is to be found in masculinity. Physical prowess, mental agility, and moral integrity are all male attributes. In the gods these attributes are writ large.

By contrast, women are the "weaker sex." Not only are they physically weak, "women are by nature of inferior understanding, without resolution, unworthy of trust, subject to passions and void of virtuous knowledge" (Ministry of Information, Government of India, 1977 : 154).

The constitutional weakness of the woman justifies the diminution of her rights and privileges, and disbars her from participation in public affairs. The only safe place in which she can live a virtuous life is within the protective walls of her home; first under the tutelage of her father; then her husband; and finally her sons.

All of these encroachments upon her freedom make life for women one long misery from girlhood to the grave.

As children, they are sometimes made the victims of infanticide. The Rajputs in the neighbourhood of Doab "are accustomed to destroy their infant daughters (Government of India, 1977 : 148). The lot of the survivors is hardly enviable. Modern legislators twist the scriptures to deprive daughters of their meagre inheritance [Nag and Burman ed., 1947 (Pt. 1) : 7]. Lower Brahmins and Kayasthas of high caste "frequently marry their female relations to men having defects and worn out by old age or disease, merely from pecuniary consideration, [Nag and Burman ed., 19+7, (Pt. 1)].

As wives, women suffer much distress. Ceremonially, she is considered "half of her husband," but once formalities are finished, she is "treated worse than inferior animals (Government of India, 1977 : 1:6). In homes that are polygamous, the wives are "subjected to mental miseries and constant quarrel (Government of India, 1977). Preference for one wife usually takes the form of cruelty toward another. Among lower classes, "on the slightest fault, or even on bare suspicion of her misconduct," a wife is "chastised as a thief (Government of India, 1977 : 157).

As widows, women are deprived of their ancient scriptural rights of inheritance by modern interpreters of the law. Step-mothers and mothers are "left destitute in the division of their husband's property, and the right of a widow exists in theory only among the learned, but unknown to the populace [Nag and Burman eds., 1947 (Pt. 1) : 3, 4].

The consequence is that when a widow loses her husband, she also loses all authority in the home. She must depend on the whims and fancies of her sons and their wives who can be very cruel. Step-mothers who are numerous in polygamous households, "Are still more shamefully neglected in general by their step-sons, and sometimes dreadfully treated by their sister-in-law who have fortunately a son or sons by their husband [Nag and Burman eds., 1947 (Pt. 1) : 4].

The prospects of such a life of daily insults drive women to choose immolation over ignominy, which makes sati something short of suicide.

All of this inhumanity stems from masculine sexism. With courage and insight rare even in this time and place, Ram Mohun unbears the myth of made superiority and lays the spiritual and

social foundations for woman's liberation. He makes his brief on the basis of the Sastra and common sense.

In effect, he says to the men of his day : You are bullies : victims of your own strength. Taking advantage of the "corporeal weakness" of women, you first deny them the freedom to develop their natural excellence, and then, when nothing is produced, you turn around and say that women are unproductive ! (Government of India, 1977 : 155).

In point of fact, what you consider to be constitutional bankruptcy of women is a projection of your own weaknesses. You and the whole "Hindu community look down upon them as contemptible and mischievous creatures," but what you see is a reflection of yourselves. You hate them because you despite yourselves. When you point one finger at women for lack of understanding, of resolution of trustworthiness, of virtuous knowledge, and subjection to passions, you point three fingers at yourselves (Government of India, 1977 : 154, 5).

On the question of their supposed intellectual inferiority, "when did you ever afford them a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity ? How then can you accuse them of want of understanding ? If, after instruction in knowledge and wisdom, a person cannot comprehend or retain what has been taught him, we may consider him as deficient; but as you keep women generally void of education and acquirements, you cannot, therefore, in justice pronounce on their inferiority (Government of India, 1977 : 155).

Could it be that you are afraid that should you give them opportunity, they might prove your equals ? The Sastras do shows that for every enlightened husband, there is an enlightened wife. Kalidasa is complimented by Bhanumati, and Yajnavalkya by Maitreyi (Government of India, 1977).

As to moral qualities, men shudder at death, but women resolutely burn themselves with the corpse of their deceased husbands. Whereas men are ten times more promiscuous than women, women are cast in the role of temptress because men are managers and manipulators of public information (Government of India, 1977). "The medium is the massage," and the medium is always male. Whereas wives desire one husband, the husband desires many wives, and the quintessence of each passion is pure selfishness.

As to the accusation that women are in want of virtuous knowledge :

> Observe what pain, what slighting, what contempt, and what afflictions their virtue enable them to support ! How many Kulin Brahmans are there who marry ten or fifteen wives for the sake of money, that never see the greater number of them after the day marriage and visit others only three or four times in the course of their life (Government of India, 1977 : 156).

On all counts, male superiority is a myth. The narrow identity of masculinity must be exchanged for the expanded identity of humanity. We are all humans who happen to be of different sexes; not sexes who happen to be human.

For females to realize their fall human potential, men must give them equal opportunities in all areas—religious, social and educational. Most important is freedom from want for Hindu widows, which means that the Hindu law of inheritance must be changed. As long as women themselves are thought of as property, there is little recognition for their need of property.

Finally, the consciousness of women must be raised. They have been brain-washed into believing all the prejudices against their sex and therefore do not believe that society owes them a better deal in life. The scriptures that are dished out of them cater to the lower levels of consciousness. No wonder, some of them are prepared to embrace sati, thinking they will reap rewards in heaven. On the other hand, if they are brought up along the path of Vedantic consciousness, they will develop a more positive self-appreciation, for they will discover that the Divine is found equally in males and females everywhere, and in all times.

Turning to the present, Renuka Ray, well-known civic leader and former Member of Parliament, states : "The role and status of women in modern Indian society flows to a great extent from the cherished objectives and ideas that inspired the renaissance in India and the awakening of women was an integral part of it (Ray, 1978 : 1). Raja Ram Mohun Roy was the progenitor of the woman's movement. "It was his activities and of those who followed in his wake, that brought into existence the women pioneers of the 19th century in India (Ray, 1978).

The attitude and approach of the Raja and his followers are still relevant for the Indian women today. They involve two foci : (1) the removal of dehumanising traditions; and (2) education and opportunities on par with men.

In respect to the first point, India's women are still bound by tradition. Their's is a man-centred world of father, husband and sons. Dr. Manashi Das Gupta, eminent educator and social scientist, remarks : "Traditionally women are considered so much to be 'the shadow' of their husbands that their separate identity is hardly recognized (Dasgupta, 1978 : 71). Presently, they only have a minority status, standing somewhere between men and children. They do have power, but it does not flow from their femininity. "A woman may be able to dominate when she is old because old people traditionally dominate the younger ones within specific limits. A young wife might, however, dominate her poor mother-in-law because she is a rich man's daughter and her father continues to support her even after marriage. Dominance and superior status thus depend on several factors. It is not a simple function of femininity (Dasgupta, 1978). The creative principle in the universe represented by the female deity, may be acknowledged, but "has not found any direct expression in Hindu social institutions" (Dasgupta, 1978). Mother, of course, is highly respected in Hindu society, but is only potentially dominant. "Had she been actually so the social situation would have been different. The mother is eulogised not because she dominates but because she gives the succour as does the sacred cow (Dasgupta, 1978).

Even those women who are successful in the public sector become dependent when they return home because they have been conditioned into depending on the men in their household. The "old feminine social values of reliance-on-others and submission-to-authority" are therefore very much alive today and are rewarded by "protection and support within the family (Dasgupta, 1978 : 70).

There are signs that a new genre of women is emerging who refuse to submit to oppressive traditions. While the author was visiting Poona in the spring of 1979, a seminar was held commemorating the birth of Lord Rama. The venue was the Rama temple in Sadashiv Peth, a bastion of orthodox Brahmanism in the city. Participating in the seminar were all ranges of middle-class women. The subject under discussion was whether it was possible to

observe the traditional code of wifely duties (*Pativrata dharma*) in the present situation. The Poona Herald made the following report :

> All the speakers narrate different tales with the same substance that woman is treated as an inferior being at home as well as in society. And they are all one in their demand that society must now change its outlook and liberalise its attitude towards women. They say that until the last generation woman was a virtual slave in the family. Whether as wife or mother or sister or daughter, her role was always subservient to man. She had lost her identity and had no existence as an individual. Now the times have changed but the old fetters have not gone. Today, woman has come out of the home and shares work with men in office and industry. But she is still expected to observe the same rules of conduct which are imposed on her when she was confined to the hearth and cradle within the four walls of the home. Let man be assured that today's woman has not forsaken her conscience and sense of responsibility; nor has she broken the accepted norms of social behaviour. But the new role which she has begun to play as a citizen demands that she be treated with equality by man at home and in society. Her dignity and status as an individual must be accepted and respected (Pardhy, 1970).

The equal rights of women have been written into the Indian Constitution. This was to be expected, both on account of the declared equality of women in the Vedas, as Ram Mohun and all of the 19th century reformers pointed out; and also because of the courageous role assumed by Indian women in the Freedom Movement against the British. Ram Mohun was the first to fight for women's right under Law; but for all its achievements the reformer recognized that effective law is contingent upon moral consciousness and the commitment of society. Former U.S. Chief Justice, Earl Warren confirms this view. He says :

> In civilized life, Law floats in a sea of Ethics. . . . Without ethical understanding, the Law, as a Ship of State, would be stranded on dry land. When there is no ethical commitment to

observe the Law, the judicial and police systems are really helpless, and the Law often ceases to operate at all*.

To develop this moral awareness, Ram Mohun showed the men of his day how that must step out of their egos and feel as females feel. Interchanging with another person's feelings dissolves ignorance and selfishness and produces true community. One can almost hear the Raja say to the millions of Indian males who make a daily hypocrisy of the rights granted to women by virtue of the Indian Constitution : "What I lament is, that, seeing the women thus dependent and exposed to every misery, you feel for them no compassion" (Government of India, 1977 : 157). The word compassion means, 'suffer with.' As long as the traditional sexist attitude prevails, and men somehow consider themselves different beings, marked off by masculinity, there can be no compassion which, as the Buddha taught, is the basis of all ethics.

The need for education and commensurate opportunities is the second point emphasised by the Raja. True, the schools he founded were for boys, as circumstances dictated, but his concern for female enlightenment is unequivocal. His educational emphasis was continued by the Brahmo Samaj and subsequently by the Arya Samaj. But, for all these and other efforts, the educational picture for females in modern India is bleak.

Dr. Alevamma George, specialist in the fields of Statistics and Demography, and Director of the Centre for Mathematical Sciences, Trivandrum, has collated some revealing statistics. In regards to the progress of female literacy, 1901-71, figures supplied by Ministry of Education show that whereas in 1901 the percentage of female literacy in relation to the total female population was 0.69, in 1971 that figure had merely crawled to 18.72. On the other hand, male literacy for the same period rose from 9.83 to 39.45—more than double the percentage for women in 1971. The growth rate of female literacy since Independence has been a mere ten per cent. We agree with Dr. George that "it is not an easy task for a nation which has emerged from the clutches of foreign rule to eradicate illiteracy of the teeming millions completely within a short period." (George, 1971 : 100) but not enough

*Earl Warren, former Chief Justice of the United States, on occasion when he was honoured with the Louis Marshall Award of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962.

is being done to bridge the gap between female and male levels of attainment. The disparity is as unhealthy as the attitudes behind it are pervasive.

Underlying the disparity between male and female levels of education is a misplaced sense of values found on all levels of society. Gita Mukharji, prominent for her social activities, points out that in all areas of life, including education, boys are given preference over girls. "In the less educated or uneducated families belonging to the lowest income group, girls, even if enrolled in primary or pre-primary schools, are taken out before completion of the term to help in domestic work, or in the family trade or to earn for the family, (Mukharji, 1978 : 108). At the other end of the social spectrum, some wealthy families oppose female education on traditional grounds.

The gap is being shortened among the lower income groups and among the middle class primarily for economic considerations and the desire for upward social mobility.

Returning to the Ministry of Education statistics, in respect to school enrolment in 1972, out of a total of 83.0 million students in grades primary, middle and high/higher secondary, 36 per cent were girls. This means that for every 17 male enrolments there were only 10 female enrolments.

The record is still more depressing in rural areas where the literacy rate is approximately 29 per cent below that of urban areas, and literacy growth among females is even lower.

In regards to the enrolment of females in universities, the figures for 1972 are somewhat encouraging. It is found thal 660,871 girls (26 per cent) enrolled in General Education and 61,046 (10 per cent) enrolled in Professional Education. The highest percentage (38 per cent) of girls was in Teacher Training, followed by Medicine (21 per cent), Commerce (5 per cent) and Engineering, Technology, etc. (1 per cent).

All of these figures have a direct bearing on the status of the Indian woman. Dr. George laments the fact that though women are the social equals of men in a theoretical and legal sense, the three decades following Independence still find women under male dominance, eking out their existence in the "grip of traditional roles." To liberate themselves from the stigmas that have been attached to their sex, women should come to know their constitutional rights; become economically self-sufficient; improve

their living standards; and the key to all these closed doors is education.

> Various studies conducted in India reveal that the social status of women is significantly related to their aspirations, opportunities for education and employment and improvement of their standard of living. Education affects employment opportunities and the decision-making role is influenced by the education and employment of wife. These are the factors which are most often related to the status of women. It is of no doubt that *the cultural progress of a country can be judged by the status accorded to women in society* (italics supplied), (George, 1978 : 103).

The concluding line is significant. All the social sciences affirm that a woman's place in society is the clearest index of its civilization. A society in which women are taught nothing but how to cater to men and to bear and bring up children is a society on its way out.

Ram Mohun had this some insight but with even greater ramifications. He saw women in the context of the nation, and the nation in the context of an international order of civilization. This vision produced in him feelings of national embarrassment because of the mistreatment of women by his countrymen. He attacked the problem with the fervour of a patriot, and when the fight over sati was successfully finished, we hear him offer thanks to Heaven, "whose protecting arm has rescued our weaker sex from a cruel murder, under the cloak of religion and *our character, as a people,* from the contempt and pity with which it has been regarded, on account of this custom, by all civilized nations on the surface of the globe" (italics supplied) (Government of India, 1977 : 163).

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10

RAMMOHAN ROY AND BAL GANGADHAR TILAK ON SOCIAL LEGISLATION

R.C. MAJUMDAR

An unreasoning blind faith in the unique achievements and infallibility of great leaders operates as a serious handicap to the study and research in the history of Modern India. This is best illustrated by the spirit of idolizing Raja Rammohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi, two of the greatest Indians flourishing, respectively, at the beginning and the end of this period. What is more curious is the fact that some of the special traits in the character of these two which made them really great are sacrificed by their followers and devotees in order to shield their heroes against any criticism or comment. The most distinguished quality of Rammohan was the spirit of rationality as against blind faith. Yet, if anything is said about him which clashes with the current view, his followers do not argue on the basis of facts, but simply denounce the critic. Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi put truth above everything else, but his disciples fight shy of this great ideal if it has even a remote chance of demolishing some of their pet views about the greatness and infallibility of their *Guru*, and fight, to put the heretic critic, unbeliever in Gandhi's infallibility and divinity, *hors he combat* in any way they can.

More than twelve years ago I challenged in a public lecture the truth of some of the current views about Rammohan Roy, namely, that he was: (1) the pioneer of English Education in Bengal; (2) the founder of, or mainly instrumental in founding, the Hindu

College in Calcutta in 1817, and (3) the father of the Bengali Prose. Abuses were showered upon me from certain quarters and one leading Bengali Periodical carried on a vile propaganda of abuse for about six months, all the while refusing to publish any reply to the critics. The campaign did not cease till a Bengali Monthly was good enough to publish an article of mine on the subject. But even though the other points were conceded, the credit for founding the Hindu College was still given to Rammohan Roy. Apart from several articles in different Journals—including one in the Presidency College Magazine—I wrote an elaborate paper on the subject which was published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Calcutta (Vol. XXI, 1955, p. 39). Since then it is generally accepted that Rammohan Roy played no part in the foundation of the Hindu College. But if a cat has nine lives, historical errors have one hundred. So, even today, distinguished professors of History give credit to Rammohan for founding the Hindu College.

Similarly, my statement in the *Glimpses of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century* (p. 54), that Rammohan was opposed to the legislative enactment prohibiting *Sati* was vigorously challenged by a writer in the *Radical Humanist*, who pitied my ignorance on even such a well-known topic. Fortunately, the *Radical Humanist* had the courtesy to publish my rejoinder and then the writer had the goodness to admit his error with the observation that such a thing would appear almost incredible in view of the general attitude of Rammohan Roy on the question.

Quite recently, Dr. Bimanbehari Majumdar has offered an *apologia* for Rammohan in his book *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas from Rammohan to Dayananda*, published in January, 1967 (p. 8). In my book refered to above I pointed out that Rammohan "preferred steady pursuit of persuasive methods to any sudden change by legislation." Dr. B. Majumdar interprets Rammohan's action in a somewhat different way and says, "Rammohan was in favour of abolishing the practice "quietly and unobservedly" and not stopping it altogether immediately." He then comments :

> "Rammohan Roy's cautious policy has been mistaken by some scholars as the denial of the right of a foreign Government to interfere in the social reform of the Hindus. Dr. R.C. Majumdar compares his attitude with that of Tilak with regard to the Age of Consent Bill and observes : 'People who blamed him

(Tilak) hardly realised that Tilak merely continued the traditions of Rammohan Roy, the pioneer of social reforms, followed by many Hindu leaders throughout the century.' But the comparison is entirely misleading because Tilak carried on a vigorous propaganda against the Age of Consent Bill even after its enactment whereas Rammohan Roy submitted to the House of Lords a petition in favour of the Regulation in July, 1831 . . ."

The logic of this argument is difficult to understand. If Rammohan thought the legislation to be wrong when it was proposed it did not cease to be wrong after it was actually passed. Any action of Rammohan after the passing of the legislation does not alter the fact that in his opinion it was wrong for the British Government to effect social reforms by legislation. Dr. B. Majumdar has evaded this main issue by omitting to explain the real ground on which Rammohan opposed the legislation. It was not merely dictated by a policy of caution and gradual aboliton, but was based on the fundamental principle that no social legislation should be undertaken by the British Government in India. This is quite clear from the following passage in the minute of Lord William Bentinck on the Suppression of Sati, dated 8, November, 1829. Referring to the views of Rammohan on the proposed legislation he says: Rammohan "apprehended that any public enactment would give rise to general apprehension, that the reasoning would be, while the English were contending for power, they deemed at politic to allow universal toleration and to respect our religion, but having obtained the supremacy their first act is a violation of their profession, and the next will probably be, like the Muhammadan conquerors, to force upon us their own religion."

Now it is agreed on all hands that Tilak opposed the Age of Consent Bill "particularly on the ground that it was not proper for Government to interfere with the accepted social customs of the people,"[1] and his "main contention was that social reform should not be imposed upon the people. It should be evolved from within."[2] If we compare it with the opinion of Rammohan, recorded by Bentinck, "that the practice (*Sati*) might be suppressed quietly and unobservedly by increasing the difficulties and by the indirect agency of the police" and not by any legislative enactment,

is it very wrong to draw the inference that Tilak continued the traditions of Rammohan Roy, for which Dr. B. Majumdar has taken me to task. His further conclusion that the comparison is entirely misleading because Rammohan carried on agitation against *Sati* is likely to create the impression that Tilak was against the principle of the Bill and did not make any effort to remove the evil for which the Age of Consent Bill was passed. Nothing can be further from truth. In a public meeting "Tilak proposed that people should voluntarily come forward to bind themselves to agree to certain measures of social reforms and when the number reached at least 200, suitable arrangements should be made for legislation applicable only to the signatories. The measures of social reform that he proposed were, that girls should not be married before completing 16 years, that boys should be married before completion of 20 years, that men should not marry after 40 years of age and if they wanted to marry they should marry a widow, that there should be complete prohibition, that the custom of dowry should be put an end to, that a person should contribute 1/10th of his income for the promotion of these social reforms and that a widow should not be tonsured. This suggession was not acceptable to the social reformers as being difficult of achievement.' [3]

After explaining all these proposals in a speech Tilak requested his friends to take a solemn pledge to abide by them once they were considered and approved. It is noteworthy that G.K. Gokhale, Hari Narayan Apte and many others signed this pledge, but nothing came out of it. As regards the Age of Consent Bill, one of the reasons advanced by Tilak against it was that all such legislation would remain a dead-letter and that social reform should be primarily achieved by educating public opinion, the initiative in in this respect being taken by the educated Indians. The result of the passing of the Bill certainly justified this view.

In conclusion, it may be added that in his opposition to the Age of Consent Bill Tilak was supported by many eminent persons including Romesh Chandra Dutt, W.C. Bonnerjee and Surendra Nath Banerji.[4] I have already pointed out that long before Tilak and since the days of Rammohan Roy there was a distinct school of opinion against legislation for social reforms,[5] and in opposing the Age of Consent Bill Tilak merely followed the tradition and cannot be held to be guilty of an unreasoning spirit of orthodoxy.

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11

RAMMOHUN AND TOLSTOY

PRABHAT KUMAR MUKHERJI*

Rammohun Roy established the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta on August 26, 1828, and Tolstoy was born eight days after at Yasnaya Polyana in Czarist Russia.

It will be idle to try to discover any point of correlation between the two disparate events—of a baby being born in the country seat of a Russian aristocrat steeped in feudal tradition, and a mature man of over fifty in Calcutta stepping out of the slough of medieval superstitions in order to make his terms with the emergent values of the modern age. When Rammohun passed away on September 27, 1833, in Bristol, Tolstoy was a boy—just turned five. With all such disparities of time and place and circumstances, how should one make a comparative study of the two personalities—each of them a hero to his own land ?

It is true that both of them gave deep thought to the social, religious, political, economic and other problems in respect of their own countries. In their approach to these problems and in the way they tackled them, there were many points of similarity. In the same way as Rammohun is described as the first revolutionary reformer of India of today, Tolstoy, too, is described as the emancipator of the Russian mind from out of the shackles of all that was medieval in Russian polity and religion. Considered from such an

*Author, well known biographer and close associate of Tagore, was for many years Librarian in Viswabharati, Santiniketan. This contribution, originally in Bengali, has been translated by Sri Kshitish Roy.

angle, one might find more than one point of comprison between the two great men. But, for the purpose of this particular article, we shall pick up for our special attention only one point of affinity—the close convergence of their thinking on religion in general and Christianity in particular.

There is a piece of personal experience attached to it which accounts for my interest in a comparative study between the two which I must share with my readers. I visited Soviet Russia for the first and only time in the autumn of 1962. I took that occasion to visit Yasnaya Polyana from Moscow one day in order to see for myself all the Tolstoy memorabilia lovingly preserved there, and to pay my respect to the great departed by visiting the birch forest where his last remains lie buried. Deep in the forest, by a meandering path, lay a simple and undistinguished mound, covered with turf in the midst of a few shrubs of wild flowers. I have seen mausoleums like with famous Taj, Itmaduddoula, etcetera, and memorials like the one at Rajghat, New Delhi. They are impressive no doubt even as state funerals. They bespeak or wearn and ostentation—but somehow they fail to stir the heart to its depth as the simple grave of Tolstoy did that day. As I stood by the graveside with my head bent, the thought occurred to me that the great Tolstoy, realising that neither the Orthodox Church nor the Czarist regime would ever foregive him for his unorthodox and revolutionary views, even after his death, very wisely chose this unconsecrated ground in his own estate for his last resting place.

Both Rammohun and Tolstoy were men of faith—they believed in the existence of God. But, God as a concept is a relative term. It is bound to differ from age to age, clime to clime, tradition to tradition and heritage to heritage. It is an evolutionary concept conditioned by men's intellectual and scientific progress, as well as the state of his civilisation. The primitive man's concept of God as an omni-potentate is qualitatively different from the modern scientist's concept of God as an invisible source of all creative energy.

All religions—or most of them—are God-oriented. There are also instance of such "godless religions" as Buddhism of the olden days and Communism in our own times. It is said that when the time came for the Buddha to depart his life, one of his disciples asked him as to who would be able to nourish and preserve the religion preached by him. His reply, we are told, was that his

religion would be preserved for posterity by the *Sangha* or the community. Unfortunately for the Buddha and his religion, after his passing away, the Sangha instead of taking sovereign control of *dhamma*, deified and worshipped him as God. The number of "ikons" painted, carved or sculpted of the Buddha, remains an all-time record for any single God.

Every religion makes its own image of God in accordance with its own scriptures. That is why the word "religion" of which the meaning should be the same world over, has denominations like Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Christian, Islamic, etcetera, prefixed to the same word in order to separate and distinguish the one from the other. Now and again, the universalist aspect of religion, as such, has been sought to be upheld. Thus, Rammohun spoke of a *universal* religion as, later on, Rabindranath Tagore spoke of a *Religion of Man*. The denominational religions have one thing in common : whatever be the revelation or inspiration that actuated the seers or the prophets to found their respective religions, in the process of interpreting the original message of the masters, their disciples and their followers and their followers' down the age, pile up codes and commentaries—a whole body of scriptual literature—which is calculated more to conceal than reveal the first flash of Truth.

Both Rammohun and Tolstoy were convinced of the fact that there could be but one religion for humanity as a whole and that the founders of the major religions had Truth and Man for their ultimate measure and neither sect nor denomination. The later accretions in the so-called scriptures were the work of the priest-craft who had found the practice of religion a profitable trade. Both of them, therefore, wanted to cut through the barriers of mere words to get the one and the only source of all religions—which is no other than God that is Truth and Truth that is God. They started on their quest through their several ways—one as a good Hindu and the other as a good Christian.

Convinced as Rammohun was that the three-fold *prasthana* of the Hindus the *Upanishads, Brahmasutras* and *Gita*—incorporated the essence of the Hindu quest after spiritual Truth, the Raja desired to make these classical Sanskrit books available in Bengali—the language of the people of his part of the country. Rammohun's own translation of the *Brahmasutras* and five of the principal *Upanishads*, following Sankaracharya's commentary on these, are a

proof (if proof were needed) that the Raja was more than convinced that the best and the highest of the Hindu heritage lay in the pristine purity of the philosophical speculations of the seers and prophets rather than in the later myths and legends, rites and rituals—invented by priests and law-givers.

Rammohun arrived at this rationalistic outlook through his love of Truth inspired by his comparative study of the religions. He never made any secret of the fact that it was his study of the religion and philosophy of Islam which first led him to this pilgrim path in search of truth. In his *Tuhafat-ul-Muwahhiddin,* he has left an eloquent testimony of his indebtedness to Islam. As a matter of fact, Rammohun did not leave any manner of doubt as to the almost equal and simultaneous emphasis that he laid on the Brahma concept of the *Upanishads*, the ethical aspect of Christianity and on the idea of social democracy inherent in Islam.

This brings us to our central topic of Rammohun's affinity with Tolstoy. Apart from their zest for life, there is plenty of evidence to show that they were both enemies of orthodoxy and conformism. Without entering into the details of these similarities, we propose now to enter straight into our main theme of their attitude to religion—with particular reference to Christianity. Here, too, we find both dealing with the fundamental Truth of Christianity in the light of the logic of history—with reason to guide them.

Rammohun's compilation of the book entitled *Precepts of Jesus* (1820) is described as *The Guide to Peace and Happiness.* The compilation is "*extracted from the Books of the New Testament ascribed to the four Evangelists*". Originally, it was intended to be issued "with translations into Sanskrit and Bengalee". Evidently the intention could not be carried out for some unforeseen difficulty. The fact that the *Precepts* were ectracted out of the four Gospels only and not out of the vast corpus of biblical literature as a whole, gave rise to violent controversy. Christian missionaries of Serampore questioned Rammohun's knowledge of their scripture as also his competence to present the precepts of their messiah. To rebut their objections, Rammohun brought out his series of three *Appeals* to the Christian Public in 1820, 1821 and 1823. These proved his familarity with the literature of the *Old* and *New Testaments* in the original as also in authorised translations. The *Appeals* bore out also that his idea in compiling the selections was no other than that the precepts should serve as a

"Guide to Peace and Happiness" in a system of world religion which he probably intended to piece together with the best elements of Islamic, Christian and Hindu scriptures.

The *Tuhafat-ul-Muwahhiddin* (1803-04) was already there containing the essence at Islam. The *Precepts* was to bring in the Christian contribution. In 1829, he compiled in a pamphlet called *Anusthan* his concept of divine worship and its method in what he considered to be in the best Hindu tradition. This he gave in the form of a dialogue between a master and his disciple, and the twelve questions discussed are all based on the three-fold *prasthanas* which contributed for Rammohun the core of Hindu philosophy. The English sub-title given to this compilation of Sanskrit quotations, is *The Universal Religion : Religious Instructions Found on Sacred Authorities.* It may well be conjectured that it was in the combination of the three—Islam rationalism, Christian Precepts and Hindu method of devine worship—that Rammohun sought to realise his ideal of an electic religion which might some day develop into a world faith.

The *Precepts* being in the nature of a selective compilation, it is probably necessary to say a few words about the principle of selection that Rammohun adopted. The *New Testament* is constituted with twenty-six separate books. Out of these, only the four Gospels were picked up—to the exclusion of the *Acts* and *Epistles*—for the purpose of the compilation. As Compiler-Editor, Rammohun pointed out that although the four Gospels were "ascribed to the four evangelists" by popular belief, there was no definite evidence to prove that Mathew, Mark, Luke and John were indeed the writers of them. Like Schweitzer in his *In Search of Historic Jesus,* Rammohun, too, pointed out disparities and contradictions in what the four books have to say about the life and work of Jesus—even apart from the quite improbable myths and miracles which some of them present as historical facts. Notwithstanding a rationalist's hesitation in accepting them as such, Rammohun assiduously pieced together such of the precepts which he considered to be Christ's essential message to the people of the work. He did the same with the message of Hinduism and of Islam. In the result, the guardians of all the three religions disowned him and dubbed him an infidal, and reviled him until the time he died in a distant land, admist strangers who had become his friends.

The same fate appears to have pursued Tolstoy, for he, too, had the temerity to reject orthodoxy and to seek the essential Christ in the very same four Gospels. He studied them in the original Greek and translated them into Russian, and interpreted the events of Jesus's life as also his teachings, in the light of his own rational thinking on the subject. Tolstoy's Russian translation was prepared some time during 1880-82. Its English translation entitled *Four Gospels Harmonised and Translated*, appeared as late as in 1904, in two parts. The volumes were said to be "an abstract from a larger work which is lying in manuscript and cannot be printed in Russia". The Czarist regime did not allow publication of "the larger work" consisting of thousands of pages in manuscript. One does not know if the manuscript still exists in the achieves of the Tolstoy Museum in Moscow, and if it does, whether anybody has done any research on it.

Rammohun had the *Precepts* printed and copies thereof distributed free of cost. Could he have his way, he would have had the book translated into Sanskrit and also Bengali. All this presupposes his deep regard for the message of Christ and his keenness to share it with his own people and to incorporate it in the universal religion of his own vision. We have already said how he was rewarded for his faith.

That Tolstoy prepared his huge tome on the same subject with such infinite pains bespeaks also of his love and regard for Christ. Novetheless, his rationalism prevented him (as it prevented Rammohun) to regard the Gospels as *revealed* scriptures. "The reader must not forget," he warned, "that the customary conception that all four Gospels are sacred books is, on the one hand, a very gross error, and, on the other, a gross deception. . . . Certain books cannot become sacred from the first to the last line for the very reason that men say that they are sacred." Like Rammohun, Tolstoy was not prepared to accept that the Gospels as they had come down were indeed the authentic writings of Mathew and the rest. He dismissed such belief as "a fable" and observed that over the ages "the Gospels were selected, complemented and expanded". Being a Unitarian, Tolstoy rejected the trinitarian idea and ridiculed that the Gospels were "by no means productions of the Holy Ghost". According to him, Christianity was a noble religion in itself, but was unfortunately a victim of false interpretations by St. Paul "who did not properly understand Christ's teaching".

12

RAMMOHUN ROY AND ONE WORLD

SUNIL KUMAR NAG

Raja Rammohun Roy, the undisputed father of the Indian renaissance, was born in 1772, fifteen years after the battle of Plassey. So it can be said that the dawn of new India was ushered in long before the foreign conquest of the country was completed. Rammohun was the symbol of human dignity, and one of the first to visualize a world government on the basis of the brotherhood of nations.

Rammohun's revolutionary achievements in many spheres within the country are well-known. So, we may bypass them and confine ourselves to a brief discussion of his achievement abroad, which is much known and is of international significance.

Rammohun died after a short illness at Bristol on 27th September, 1833. There are reasons to believe that his conception of international brotherhood was nipped in the bud by his premature death. But he availed himself of the little time and scope that he had to make his ideas known. The fact that he belonged to a subject country surely stood in the way of proper evaluation and recognition of his ideas on international affairs.

As early as the early twenties of the nineteenth century, Rammohun realized that the nations were interdependent and that the freedom of the Asian peoples depended on the real freedom of the Western peoples. So he was very happy to learn that a popular government had come into being in Spain. He arranged for a dinner in the Town Hall, Calcutta and invited the dignitaries of

the city to it. At this celebration he said : "Ought I to be insensible to the suffering of my fellow creatures wherever they are, or however, unconcerned by interests, religion or language ?"

The fact that the peoples of Latin America were getting ready to wrest freedom from the unwilling hands of various European exploiters gave him much pleasure. When the popular government of Naples was overthrown by the autocratic diplomacy of Metternich, Rammohun wrote : "I consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own, and their enemies, as ours. Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been and never will be ultimately successful."

For long Rammohun cherished a desire to visit the Western world and see for himself how the common people asserted themselves. His opportunity came in 1830, when something was to be done to strengthen Bentinck's attempt to forbid *suttee*. The Emperor Akbar II, the titular rular of India, conferred on him the title of 'Raja', and appointed him as his Ambassador to plead for him before the Directors of the East India Company.

Rammohun sailed for England on November 19, 1830. When the ship ALBION carrying Rammohun reached Cape Town, he heard of the revolution of 1830 in France. The common people seized rights and privileges as never before, and Louis-Philippe became king as the elect of the sovereign people. Rammohun's jubilation at this event was so heart-felt that when he heard that two ships flying the French tricolour were anchored at the same port, he left his ship, disregarding illness and went to one of the French ships to salute the flag of revolutionary France.

The ALBION reached Liverpool on April 8, 1831. He was enthusiastically received. The name of Rammohun Roy was known even among the common people of the British isles. He was known as a man of deep learning, and as a bold social reformer and promoter of education.

On hearing the news of Rammohun's arrival, the famous historian William Roscoe, then an old man of 77, expressed his desire to meet him. Roscoe was known in the Western world as the author of the *Life of Lorenzo de Medici* (1796), but to Rammohun he was the respected author of *The Wrongs of Africa* (1787), a book in which he vehemently protested against the slave-trade. Rammohun was courteous enough to go to the old historian's residence to meet him.

From Liverpool Rammohun started for London *via* Manchester. Sutherland, who accompanied him, wrote in 1835 in the *India Gazette* about his visit to the Manchester factories: "When the Raja visited the great factories, all the workmen struck work, and men, women and children rushed in crowds to see 'the king of Ingee'!"

On reaching London the first thing, that Rammohun did was to meet the famous political philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who, in the words of John Stuart Mill: "found the philosophy of law a chaos, and left it a science."

In England, Rammohun had no rest. Dignitaries and common people all alike flocked to his residence. Meetings were organized by the learned societies and the more enlightened section of the populace to be addressed by Rammohun. The Government accepted his title of Raja and showed him due respect as Ambassador of India by according him an invitation to the coronation of William IV. At the opening ceremony of London Bridge Rammohun was present at the invitation of the king. The Royal Asiatic Society invited him to address their annual meeting. The East India Company honoured him at a dinner on July 6, 1831.

While in England, Rammohun published eleven books and pamphlets. These were published by Smith, Elder and Co. and Parbury, Allen and Co.

While he was in England, great excitement was aroused among the people by the Reform Bill. When the Bill was ultimately passed, after a failure of the Ministry and stout opposition by the House of Lords, Rammohun wrote to one of his friends, William Rathbone: "I am now happy with the complete success of the Reform Bill notwithstanding the violent opposition and want of political principle on the part of aristocrats."

Rammohun had a very high opinion of the political and philosophical contributions of the French thinkers in general and the freedom-loving common man of France in particular. So he decided to visit that country, and was there for four months (September-December, 1832). He was very cordially received by Louis-Philippe. The letter that Rammohun wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France contained among other important things, his ideas about one world:

It is now generally admitted that not religion only but unbiased

> common sense as well as the accurate deductions of scientific research lead to the conclusion that all mankind are one great family of which numerous nations and tribes existing are only various branches. Hence, enlightened men in all countries must feel a wish to encourage and facilitate human intercourse in every manner by removing as far as possible all impediments to it in order to promote the reciprocal advantage and enjoyment of the whole human race.
>
> The ends of constitutional government might be better attained by submitting every matter of political difference between two countries to a Congress composed of an equal number from the Parliament of each.

Needless to say, his idea of one world died, at least for the time being, within a few months of his return to England. It was generally agreed even by stalwart English and French thinkers that Rammohun was ahead of his time even according to European standards.

But a great thought is perhaps never lost for good. That was why, after many battles and wars, especially after the First World War, nearly eighty-five years after the demise of Rammohun, the greatest thinkers of the Western world had to take up the idea again, and the League of Nations was born. That was the first step, although a very weak one, towards a world government.

The second and more positive, practical and sincere step towards a world government was taken in the formation of the United Nations Organization. During the past two decades and a half this body has contributed towards effective control of serious local crises like the Berlin problem, the Korean war, the Vietnam war, the Congo conflict, the Suez crisis and the Israel-UAR war, each of which could have led to the Third World War. The power and prestige of the UNO are definitely on the increase from year to year.

All these only show that thinking people all over the world are becoming conscious of the necessity of a world-government. It seems sure that today or tomorrow, mankind will come under a single unitary government, if it is to survive. Rammohun's immortal soul will have no rest till that day.

13

RAMMOHUN ROY AND THE REV. JARED SPARKS

Dr. Spencer Lavan*

Joining in the Bi-Centenial Celebrations of the birth of Rammohun Roy, and the search for new materials by and about him, I have recently published two essays dealing with the reaction of American Unitarians to Rammohun during his own lifetime.[1] While the center of this Unitarian interest and activity was primarily in Boston, the well-known correspondence between Rammohun and the Rev. Henry Ware, Sr. of Harvard University (in which William Adam also joined), did not get published until 1824, the same year in which a letter from Rammohun was published in the *Christian Register*, a Boston religious weekly newspaper.[2]

Rammohun corresponded at least twice with the Rev. Jared Sparks, a young Unitarian Minister in Baltimore, during October and December, 1822. Excerpts from these letters have appeared previously in three volumes of materials by and about Roy. In none of these, however, was the Rev. Jared Sparks identified as the recipient of Rammohun's letters. Rather, the phrase, "to a gentleman of Baltimore" appeared in each case,[3] as the identifying source.

Why should I wish to trace these letters from Rammohun to the Rev. Jared Sparks ? The significance of this correspondance points first to the fact that Rammohun and William Adam already

*Assistant Professor, Dept. of Religion, Tufts University.

knew that William Ellery Channing had preached his famous polemical sermon, 'Unitarian Christianity' at Sparks' ordination at the Baltimore Church in 1819. Sparks born on May 10, 1789, was educated at Harvard Divinity School at the height of the controversy there between the Calvinist Congregationalists and the Unitarians. Opting to serve a congregation as far south as Baltimore and welcoming Channing and a host of leading Boston Unitarian spokesmen to participate in his ordination was a courageous step. Sparks, thus, was the first Unitarian to establish himself outside the Boston area. The occasion of his ordination was a major religious event which made public the manifesto of Unitarion Christianity to Protestant America.[4]

With the return of Channing, Joseph Sparks sat alone, on a frontier of religious liberalism, two hundred miles from the nearest Unitarian Church in New York, four hundred miles from Boston. In '821, he began the first Unitarian monthly magazine published outside Boston. It was in Baltimore that he first wrote of the Unitarian controversy in Calcutta during February, 1822, later publishing excerpts of letters from William Adam and also Rammohun's "Brahmanical Arguments Against the Trinity."

In 1823, Jared Sparks resigned his pastorate and returned to Harvard where he served as a professor and later as its President, (1849-1853). His particular importance lies in his role as the first American historian of American history. Responsible for collecting the scattered papers of George Washington, Sparks was the first biographer of the General and President. He was also the first to look upon the period of the revolution with the eye of a scholar and historian. With these facts in mind, Jared Sparks' early interest in Rammohun Roy and William Adam takes on added meaning.

The two letters quoted below in their entirety are located in the collection of Jared Sparks' papers at Harvard University.[5]

From Calcutta, October 17, 1822 .... Received, March 20, 1823.

My dear Sir,

I know not how to express the delight I felt in receiving your communication through our friend Mr. Poole and how pround I feel of the notice you have bestowed upon me I cannot describe. I have now every reason to hope that the truths of Christianity will not be much longer kept hidden under the veil of heathen

doctrines and practices gradually introduced among the followers of Christ, when so worthy a person as yourself and many other lovers of truth are zealously engaged in rendering the religion of Jesus clear from corruptions.

I admire the zeal of the missionaries sent to this country, but disapproved of the means they have adopted. In the performance of their duty they always begin with such obscure doctrines as are calculated to incite ridicule instead of respect towards the religion they wish to promulgate. The accompanying pamphlets called "The Brahmanical Magazine" published by a Brahmin are proof of my assertion : the last number of this publication has remained unanswered for twelve months. If a body of men attempts to upset a set of doctrines generally established in a country and to introduce another, they are, in my humble opinion in duty bound to prove the truth or at least the superiority of their own. It is, however, a great satisfaction to my conscience to find that the doctrines inculcated by Jesus and by his apostles are quite different from those human inversions which the Missionaries are persuaded to prefess and entirely consistent with reason and revelation delivered by Moses and the preceding prophets. I am therefore anxious to support them, even at the risk of my own life. I rely much on the force of truth which will, I am sure, ultimately prevail. Our number is comparably few, but I am glad to inform you that none of them can be justly charged with the want of zeal and prudence. Mr. Poole is so obliging as to engage himself to give you and to all our friends in America a detailed account of our institution in Bengal.

I, in common with all my friends, shall feel very much obliged if you will honorous with your advice and instructions whenever an opportunity occurs. I beg you will accept my sincere thanks for the valuable works of which you made me a present. These are of great use to me in my inquiries after truth. I shall lose no time in sending to you my Final Appeal to the Christian Public as soon as it is printed. In the meantime, I remain with the utmost regard and respect.

Yours most faithfully,
(Sgn.) Rammohun Roy

I wish to add in order that you may set me right if you find me mistaken—my view of Christianity is that in representing all

mankind as the children of one eternal Father, it enjoins them to love one another without making any distinction of country, caste, colour or creed; notwithstanding, they may be justified in the sight of the Creator, in manifesting their respect towards each other according to the propriety of their actions and reasonableness of their religious opinions and observances.

RMR

Calcutta, October 17, 1822

My dear Sir,

As our friend, Mr. Poole, is about to leave Bengal for America, I embrace the opportunity afforded me, of repeating my acknowledgements for your letters and publications and of assuring you of my continued esteem for yourself and regard for the country of which you are native and where the truths of religion may be so freely discussed. We have been very much gratified by the perusal of the publications with which you have favoured us and cannot but anticipate a day when enlightened reason and sound learning will obtain a signal triumph over polytheism and bigotry.

Any publication particularly those that are periodical, with which you may favour us, will be gratefully received and we, on the other hand, will be glad to supply you with works connected with this country which may be calculated to interest you.

Although our adversaries are both numerous and zealous, as the adversaries of truth always have been, yet our prospects are by no means discouraging, if we only have the means of following up what has already been done. We rejoyce to hear your prospects in America are equally encouraging and your success much greater.

We confidently hope that through these various means, that period will be accelerated when the belief in the divine unity and the mission of Christ will universally prevail.

The Rev. Mr. Adam joins me in Christian regards and affections.

I remain, my dear sir,
Yours most faithfully,
Rammohun Roy

Calcutta, December 9, 1822
Rev. Jared Sparks

I shall in all probability visit America in 1824 when I hope I shall be able to derive personal advantage from your company.

RMR

Jared Sparks had already published two articles, one about the writings of Rammohun and one on William Adam's work as a Unitarian in Calcutta in February and June of 1822. The lead article of his publication, *The Unitarian Miscellany and Christian Monitor*, in June, 1823 was the "Brahmanical Arguments Against the Trinity", written in the belief that its author was someone other than Rammohun. Sparks was not only impressed with this work but also clearly with Rammohun. In his two concluding paragraphs, he wrote :

> "But all these Brahmunical arguments against the Trinity are arguments from reason alone. The Christian Scruptures themselves are not adduced; and the missionaries may still entrench themselves, and their doctrines behind the strong external evidence for the divine, and therefore decisive authority of these writings. One native has come forward, and examined the Bible itself; and while he sees and acknowledges its truth and divinity, he is convinced it does not authorise, countenance, the dogmas of Trinitarianism. He is thus enabled to oppose the missionaries with the weapons of both reason and revelation. This native is Rammohun Roy. By the force of his intellect he has not only thrown off the shackles of his early faith, but has discovered the true form of another, which was presented to him metamorphosed and disguised. From his learning and judgment we are led to expect the most favorable influences on the minds of his countrymen, and to regard him as an important instrument in the spread of pure Christianity."[8]

What one learns from uncovering the context of these letters from Rammohun to Sparks is this : that Rammohun was in correspondance with and receiving letters and periodicals from Sparks early in 1822. This represents the first continuing contact between Rammohun and any American, for it was not until 1824 that David Reed, editor of the *Christian Register*, received and published an answer to a letter he had solicited from Rammohun. It is conceivable that Rammohun would also have conducted correspondence with the famed Rev. William Ellery Channing of Federal Street Church in Boston except that Channing departed for Europe in the spring of 1822 on leave of absence.

It is also clear from the closing paragraphs of Jared Sparks' 1823 article that Unitarian Christians, whether in Boston or Baltimore, were ready to accept Rammohun as a Christian and were eager to interpret his courage in the struggle against the missionaries as a sign that he would soon convert. It is at this point that a new missionary zeal on the part of American Unitarians began to grow, furthered by the frequent pleadings of William Adam for personal and financial support in Calcutta. Of the eight extant letters from Adam to Sparks, five were written from Calcutta between April, 1825 and June, 1827 with the remaining three written from England and Massachusetts in 1841 and 1844. While these letters do not shed any new light on Rammohun Roy, one dated June 24, 1827 details government censorship aad closing down of the *Calcutta Chronicle* of which Adam was then the editor. Sparks had returned to Harvard University from Baltimore by the time Adam wrote to him from Calcutta. Thus, while news of Rammohun Roy spread through Americal Unitarianism *via* Boston publications, the personal contacts clearly began on the Unitarian frontier, in Baltimore, early in 1822.

Notes and References

1. See my "Rammohun Roy and the American Unitarians : New Words to Conquor (1821-1834", *Bengal Studies Popers, 1972*, East Lansing, Michigan, 1973; and my "American Unitarian Perceptions of Rammohum Roy", *Rammohum Roy Bi-centenary Volumes*, New York and Calcutta, 1973. After preparing these essays I discovered the bibliographic work of Adrienne Moore, Calcutta, 1942 which traced many of the same sources used in these essays.
2. Henry Ware, *Correspondence Relative to the Prospects of Christianity in India*, Cambridge, Mass. 1824; see also *Christian Register*, Boston, May 7, 1824 for Rammohum Roy's letter to David Reed, recently republished by Prof. D.K. Biswas in *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. XCI, Jan.-June, 1972, Part I.
3. Mary Carpenter, *The Last Days in England of Rammohum Roy*, Trubner and Co., London, 1866, p. 49; *The English Works of Rammohum Roy*, Nag and Burham (eds.), Part IV, pp. 85-86; and S.D. Collect, *Raja Rammohum Roy* (ed. Biswas and Ganguli), Calcutta, 1962, p. 133.
4. The context and history of the "Baltimore Sermon" has been excellently discussed by C. Conrad Wright in his *Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1961.

5. For brief biographical notes on the Rev. Jared Sparks see *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. IX, pp. 430-34.
6. The full text of these letters is republished "by permission of the Harvard College Library", I am indebted to librarian, W.H. Bond for access to the Sparks papers.
7. October 17, is the correct date of the first letter. All printed sources have given October 27 as the date.
8. Jared Sparks, "Bramunical Arguments against the Trinity", *Unitarian Miscellany and Christian Monitor*, Vol. IV, June, 1823.

PART II

14

RAMMOHUN ROY'S MEMORANDUM ON THE SYSTEM OF LAND HOLDING IN BRITISH INDIA

DILIP KUMAR BISWAS*

It is well-known that Rammohun Roy had made exhaustive comments on the contemporary judicial and revenue systems of India in course of the evidence submitted by him before the Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed in 1831 to consider the renewal of the East India Company's Charter. He had preferred to tender his evidence in the form of successive 'Communications to the Board of Control' which 'besides duly appearing in the Blue Books' were published from London in a separate volume by Messrs. Smith Elder and Co. in 1832 under the title *Exposition of the Practical Operation of the Judicial and Revenue Systems in India and the General Character and Condition of its Native Inhabitants as submitted in Evidence to the Autharities in England with notes and illustrations and Brief Preliminary Sketch of the Ancient and Modern Boundaries, and of the History of that Country Elucidated by a Map.* In the *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the affairs of the East India Company* the evidence of Rammohun is to be found in the following places :

1. 1831, Vol. V, pp. 716-23; copy of communication between

*Sanskrit College, Calcutta

Rammohun Roy and the Board of Control relative to the Revenue and Judicial System of India; 54 questions proposed to Rammohun Roy and his answers dated 19th August 1831. Subjects: Revenue System of India, Tenure of Land, Rate of Rent, Title of Land, Improvement of the State of Cultivators and Inhabitants at large.

2. Ibid., pp. 723-26; Paper on the Revenue System of India by Rammohun Roy, dated London, August 19th, 1831.
3. Ibid., pp. 726-39; 78 questions and answers on the Judicial System of India, dated September 19th, 1831.
4. Ibid., pp. 739-41; 13 additional queries and answers respecting the condition of India, dated September 28th, 1831.
5. Vol. VIII, 1831-32, Section V, pp. 341-43; remarks by Rommohun Roy on the Settlement of Europeans in India, dated July 14th, 1832.
6. Report of 1833, Appendix p. 366; evidence of Rammohun Roy on the condition of the ryots in India.[1]

It has been generally supposed that Rammohun Roy wrote and published all that he had to say on contemporary economic conditions and problems of India, in 1831-32, shortly before his death; and indeed his available writings had so far afforded no occasion for any alternative hypothesis. Previous to 1831 we had so far volumes from his available writings had so far afforded no occasion for any alternative hypothesis. Previous to 1831 we had so far volumes from his pen on religious, social and educational issues, but there was hardly any evidence that he had seriously and systematically applied his mind to economic problems of his country. Yet, taking into consideration the comprehensiveness of his intellect, the breadth of his social sympathies and the surprisingly mature character of his late publications on economic matters, it would be difficult to believe that his economic thinking sprang into existence only during his last days with a high measure of suddenness without having to pass through any earlier preparatory stage of development.[2]

Struck by the apparent enigma the present writer was induced to re-read and re-scrutinise the earlier writings of Rammohun in the hope of being able to trace in it some possible anticipation of his later economic outlook, and the following significant passage in his

letter to Dr. (later, Sir) John Bowring (1792-1872), dated September 15, 1822, at once furnished the desired clue : 'Having been principally engaged in completing my final appeal to the Christian public, I could not pay due attention to my intended long memorial. I, however, made an attempt to bring it to a conclusion after I had the pleasure of receiving your note on Saturday last week, but from the want of some additional Revenue documents under the Moghul Government which my native friends of the upper provinces have not yet furnished me with, as well as from a diversion of attention, I am afraid, I shall not be able to prepare it before your departure from India. As this will be my first production in political affairs, I am, therefore, very anxious to have it as perfect and well-authenticated as possible, so that having established it on a sane foundation, no person can justly ascribe it to a party feeling or discontent with Government'. In a post-script it is added : 'I hope you will not at present mention to anyone the purport of the memorial which is not yet presented to L.H.'[3] It is clear from the passage that even during the hectic days of theological controversy with the Baptist missionaries Rammohun had time to spare for the compilation of a 'long memorial' which was going to be his 'first production in political affairs'; he had nearly finished drafting it by the middle of September 1822, but had postponed conclusion 'from the want of some additional Revenue documents under the Moghul Government',—obviously intended to be used as data,—which were still to arrive; he wanted to make it a purely objective study, free from all political bias 'as prefect and well authenticated as possible'; and it was intended to be presented to Lord Hastings the Governor-General.

Scholars have so far failed to grasp the entire significance of the revealing lines. Thus, Brajendranath Banerji who first published the letter in the June 1927 issue of *The Modern Review* merely informs in a foot-note that he has not been able to ascertain what the 'long memorial' mentioned in it, refers to. The editors of the latest collection of Rammohun Roy's *English Works* while reprinting the text leave it without any comment. Yet, there is hardly any doubt that Rammohun himself had attached great importance to his contemplated 'long memorial'. Though in the letter he characterises it as a 'production in political affairs', the reference to 'revenue documents under the Moghul Government' among his material, indicates that his basic topic was probably connected with

the contemporary land problem and revenue administration. Further, the manner in which he speaks of it to Bowring, shows that he was working on it all on his own and in secret. The 'memorial' had not been officially asked for.

However, so far as our present knowledge goes, Rammohun's intention of submitting the 'memorial' to Lord Hastings had not been fulfilled. Nor do the available official and private records indicate anywhere that he had completed and circulated it during the respective regimes of John Adam and Lord Amherst. Various factors might have been at work behind this temporary lull in Rammohun's economic studies; we can lay our finger at least on a few for which there is clear and contemporary evidence. From 1822 to 1829 he had been increasingly drawn into the whirlpool of polemical and academic controversies relating to social, religious and educational issues. A glance at the list of his publications during this phase would show that he had brought out no fewer than thirty books and tracts—thirteen in Bengali and seventeen in English. This undoubtedly took a heavy toll of his time and energy. Further, this was the period when the two life-long struggle waged by him—the search for an institutional medium for expressing his universalist stand in religion and the all-out war against *sati*—were heading towards climax and the iron grip of the resultant tension loosened only with the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj (1828) and the passing of the anti-*sati* Regulation by Bentinck (1829). The criminal case instituted against his son in 1826-27 was also a permanent source of anxiety. It is, therefore, understandable why Rammohun could not or did not complete the preparation of his intended politico-economic document during this stormy period of his life.

Towards the close of the year 1829 Rammohun had at last got some breathing space. During the administration of Bentinck he had been rehabilitated in the official circles and sort of a close personal tie had grown up between him and the Governor-General. It was to be expected therefore that he would consider the moment opportune for resuming his 'memorial' and would try to bring it to the notice of the administration.

Now, in course of his investigations, the present writer has come upon a 'memorandum' on the system of land-holding in British India, entered as having come from Rammohun Roy in the Portland Collection of Bentinck Papers now in the possession of the

It is an undeniable fact that
during the former Government such class
of persons as are now termed Proprietors of
land and such as are called Ryots or com-
-mon Cultivators of the soil stood practi-
-cally on an equal footing both as to the
uncertainty of assessment on the lands
in their hands and their liability to be
dispossessed of them on failure to meet
the demands of a higher authority

The British Government
of Bengal conforming to established usage
acted on this system until so late as
793, when with a view to facilitate the
collection of the revenue and to afford
to the Landholders fair encouragement
to improve their respective estates, the
permanent settlement with them was
established, assessing each estate for perpetuity
at a particular annual sum payable to
Government by instalments— This system
has amply met the wishes of Government,
and has exceeded the hope of advantage

Facsimile of the First Page of Rammohun's Memorandum

DEPT. OF MSS.
NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND.

Nottingham University Library, England. It is a closely written MS of nine foolscap (13″ × 8″) pages with library catalogue number PWJF 2735. On the back of the manuscript there is the following clear pencilled inscription :

Rammohun Roy
Ryut Regns
5 Dec.
(Manuscript old Welback number 1869)

The year of the finished composition can be inferred to have been 1829 from the expression 'during a period of upwards of six and thirty years' used in paragraph three (p. 3) with referenee to the enactment of the Permanent Settlement in 1793. This, coupled with the date '5 Dec.' on the back, would lead us to the tentative conclusion that Rammohun Roy had submitted the 'memorandum' in the finished form on December 5, 1829.

On broad points the contents of the memorandum resemble those of the 'evidence' tendered by Rammohun relating to the revenue system prevailing in India, before the Select Committee of the House of Commons two years later. There are, however, some interesting details which may be regarded as forming its distinctive feature. One notices the same keen analysis of the position of the land-holders and the condition of the ryots under the Permanent Settlement and a graphic description of the tillers of the soil groaning under an ever increasing burden of rent. The writer proceeds to show that while the new system has been of immense financial benefit to the government and the land-holders, under it the condition of the third party concerned, consisting of 'that most numerous but indigent class of British subjects called Ryots' has shown a steady deterioration. During the period of thirty-six years that has elapsed since 1793, the zumeendars, taking advantage of the fixed rate of revenue payable to the government, have increased their own income by the cultivation of waste land as well as by exploiting the ryots by raising their rent under every pretence. They have also often resorted to illegal exactions 'under the name of ubwabs or subscriptions or for granting permission for the performance of marriages or any other religious ceremony . . . . which is very general in the eastern parts of Bengal, in the estates near Tumlook and Hidglee, and in the district of Rungpore etc.' In

the context, certain concrete steps in the form of specific administrative measures are suggested to stop this exploitation of the peasantry. These consist mainly of preparation of the part of land-holders, under official direction, of accurate surveys of the estates showing correctly the number of villages, the areas cultivated by individual or individuals, the amount of rent paid for each 'area' and the names of the payers, appertaining to the estates. These statements from the land-holders must be submitted to the Collectors of districts and must be carefully checked and verified by the latter. On the basis of these verified accounts and statements perpetual contracts should be made with the individual cultivators and land should be leased out to them and their heirs and assignees at a fixed rent. On no account must the landholders be permitted to effect any further increase in rent and they should be 'strictly prohibited under penalty of fine and confinement' from making any extra demands beyond the rent, from the cultivators (p. 7). As to measurement the rule observed within the jurisdiction of Calcutta may be regarded as the uniform standard everywhere and the land-holder should be deprived of opportunities to 'harrass and intimidate the Ryots' by having recourse to fresh and arbitrary measurement. In case of failure on the part of any zumeendar 'in rendering the statement and the leases' within six months from the date of promulgation of the Government Order to that effect, no complaint for the recovery of arrears of revenue alleged to have been due from any ryot, should be entertained by any court (p. 8).

The above resume shows the memorandum to be both an analysis of existing conditions and a suggestion of specific remedies. Rammohun had wanted the land system to be based on a tripartite contract with adequate safeguards to save the ryots from all types of exploitation of the zumeendars. The administrative steps he had suggested were clear and concrete and he had not hesitated to recommend heavy punishments for the zumeendars (including imprisonment and fine) for their prevailing practice of making various extra demands on the ryots beyond the prescribed rent. The contract with ryots according to him should also be perpetual with the rent fixed.

There is good reason to think that the present memorandum is identical with the 'long memorial' which Rammohun had mentioned in his letter to Bowring as early as 1822. Though to him it

was his 'first production in political affairs', the special importance attached to some revenue documents of the Mughal period intended to be used as data, indicates, as has been previously observed, that it was meant to be a document connected with some problems of the Company's revenue administration. The fact that he was suggesting certain measures for making the administration effective and benevolent might well have prompted him to describe the 'memorial' as a 'production in political affairs'. We have to remember that the draft had been nearly completed by the middle of September 1822, and further that its preparation for which Rammohun alone was responsible, was being kept a secret. This, together with the author's desire to present it to Lord Hastings, precludes all possibility of it being identical with the *Memorial to the Supreme Court* against Governor Adam's Press Ordinance, the occasion for which arose as late as March 1823. The questions of Rammohun's three other productions of a 'political nature,' viz., *The Appeal to the King in Council* against the Press Ordinance (1825), *The Petition of the Padishah of Delhi to King George IV of England* (1829) and *The Petition to the Government against Regulation III of 1828* (1829) produced during the period concerned, do not arise in the context. The memorandum was a labour of love. Rammohun's knowledge and experience had made him aware of the pitiable conditions of the Indian peasantry under the Permanent Settlement and he most intensely felt that something must be done to ameliorate the distress of these victims of exploitation. This has induced him to draw up his report and ultimately submit it to the authorities. Since the final submission was apparently deferred by a few years, we have no means of ascertaining whether the author submitted it in the original form or after a certain amount of revision and modification. However, there now seems to remain hardly any doubt that Rammohun's economic thinking was not the result of a sudden brain-wave caused by the summons he had received from the House of Commons in 1831. His speculations on Indian economy would perhaps have to be dated back to 1822 or even prior to this year. The evidence tendered before the Select Committee was largely an amplification of certain distinct lines of thought he had developed earlier in life.

TEXT*

(UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND : MS. PWIF 2735 : FOOLSCAP 13"×8")

[1] It is an undeniable fact that during the former Government such class of persons as are now termed Proprietors of land and such as are called Ryots or common Cultivators of the soil stood practically on an equal footing both as to the uncertainty of assessment on the lands in their hands and their liability to be dispossessed of them on failure to meet the demands of a higher authority.

The British Government of Bengal conforming to established usage acted on this system until so late as 1793, when with a view to facilitate the collection of the revenue and to afford to the Land-holders fair encouragement to improve their respective estates, the permanent settlement with them was established, assessing each estate for perpetuity at a particular annual sum payable to Government by instalments.—This system has amply met the wishes of the Government and has exceeded the hope of advantage [2] then entertained by the Landholders themselves.—Waste lands have been cultivated on every direction and the rents payable by Ryots have been raised to a great extent under various pretences on the part of the Land-holders, so that many estates yield at present double the revenue paid to the Government by their respective Proprietors and there can scarcely be found a Zumindaree in the country which does not afford a considerable profit to its Proprietor.—Nevertheless the Land-holders have not directed their attention to ameliorate the condition of that most numerous but indigent class of British subjects called Ryots, in admitting them to a participation in the extensive benefit they themselves enjoy from the perpetual settlement.—No Zumeendar has ever proposed to grant his Ryots the same indulgence that Government spontaneously conferred [3] upon him in 1793. Nay, in proportion as their income increases their desire for further extortion seems excited.—Experience thus sufficiently indicates that the Zumeendars never will of their own accord perform the duty which they owe to their own character, to—Government and to those placed under their immediate management.

*Bracketed figures represent, page numbers in the original Ms.—D.K.B.

After continued successful exertions by the Zumeendars during a period upwards of six and thirty years to raise the rent of lands in their respective estates they cannot, under the present state of things, fairty effect a further increase of rent to any great degree in those lands.—It is now desirable that Government should adopt such measures as may be best calculated to secure the rights and independence of the Ryots without depriving the Zumeendars of those revenues which they have been hitherto permitted to appropriate to themselves.

It is accordingly [4] suggested that in the first instance every Land-holder should be required to prepare a correct statement, containing under the title of each estate he may hold, names of the villages appertaining to that estate, the portions cultivated by different individuals and the rent now paid for each portion and lastly the name of the individual cultivator or cultivators by whom the rent of such portion is actually paid.

Every Land-holder should be also required to deliver a copy of the statement thus prepared by him into the Kutchuhree of the Collector of the District in which the estate is situated, that the Collector may carefully ascertain its accuracy by comparing it with the last Jumma Wassil Bakee Papers* delivered into his records by the Kanoongou.

When the Collector is satisfied of the accuracy of the statement he should affix his signature to every page of it and of a duplicate copy, one to be kept among the Records of the Collectorship [5] Collectorship (*sic*) and the other to be returned Land-holder himself or to his Mokhtar in attendance.

The Land-holder should then be required to grant leases corresponding with the statement approved of by the Collector and upon these being duly attested by the Collector they should be declared perpetual to the individual or individuals concerned and their heirs or assignees after a counterpart contract has been entered upon by that party.

As to measurement, the rule observed within the jurisdiction of Calcutta may be extended through all the Company's territories, that is, each portion of land occupied by a particular individual or individuals should be considered consisting of each quantity as is

*'Accounts showing the particulars of the revenue to be paid, of the instalments discharged, and the arears due'.—D.K.B.

mentioned in the Putta with its specific boundaries.—No power should be given to the Land-holders which can enable them to harrass and intermediate the Ryots with proclamation of fresh measurement.

About two years ago an energitic Judge and Magistrate within 25 miles of the Presidency met with [7] partial success in a measure similar to that proposed. Through his personal vigilence this judicial officer discovered the constant extortion imposed on the Ryots by their Land-holders and from a sense of humanity was induced to affix his seal to every Putta or written lease presented before him by a Ryot as granted by his Zumeendar—a conduct which though not precisely prescribed in the Regulation of Government, has deterred the Zumeendar under his jurisdiction from practising further extortion.

Everv Zumeendar should be strictly prohibited under penalty of fine and confinement, from demanding of the Ryots, under the name of Ubwabs or subscriptions or for granting permission for the performance of marriages or any other religious ceremony, any payment beyond what is specified in their Puttas a practice which is very general in the eastern parts of Bengal, in the estates near Tumlook and Hidglee, and in the district of Rungpore etc.

In case, the Ryot should announce to the Collector his refusal to hold the land at the rate specified, the Zumeendar pursuant to the treatment of Government towards the Land-holders in 1973, may either reserve to himself the management of that portion of land or farm it out to another individual in the same manner as he has the power to act with regard to waste lands.

In examining the statement produced by the Zumeendar—should doubts arise in particular [6] case as to the exact amount of rent or concerning the names of cultivators, the Collector should call upon the Zumeendar to produce the written contract previously executed by the Ryot as well as upon the Ryot to lay before the Collector the Putta and the receipt granted him by the Zumeendar and he should decide on those points according to that document.

[8] To expedite the preparation of the statement and leases already proposed it is suggested that the Zumeendars should be publicly informed that in case of failure on their part in rendering the statement and the leases required within six months from the date of the promulgation of the orders of Government, no

complaint for the recovery of arrears of revenue alleged to be due from Ryots shall be recognised in any judicial court.

If Government be not prepare to bestow on this class of its subjects the security above proposed, the least which common justice requires of the ruling power would be, that the Collector of land revenue should be directed to ascertain, if possible, from his own records the different rates attached to the soils of different descriptions in every village, or in case no document showing the rates of a particular [9] particular (*sic*) village, to prepare a statement of the rates to be observed from reference to the rates of the immediately neighbouring villages. The Colletor should also be directed to furnish the Judge and the Magistrates of the District with copies of those rates that the decision in civil cases as far as matters of rent are concerned may be founded on those statements. The Magistrates at the same time should be directed to extent themselves in preventing the least infringement of the rates thus fixed and publicly registered. This measure however would obviously be far less efficient than that first proposed; but, while it served as some security against extortion to the indolent Ryot, it would deprive the more active and intelligent of the strongest inducement to improve his land and adopt it for the cultivation of produce of a superior description to that now actually raised.

[On the back]

Rammohun Roy
Ryut Regns
5 Dec.

(Manuscript old Welback number 1869)

Notes and References

1. See Mary Carpenter, *The Last Days in England of the Raja Rommohum Roy*, Third Ed., Calcutta, 1915, pp. 113-19; *The Father of Modern India : Commemoration Volume of the Rammohum Roy Centenary Celebrations, 1933*, Calcutta, 1935, Pt. II, p. 64; Collet, *The life and Letters of Raja Rammohum Roy*, ed. D. K. Biswas and P. C. Ganguli, Calcutta, 1962, pp. 382-83. Rammohum Roy's separate volume containing the text of his evidence has been included in the collected editions of his English writings, cf. *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy,* ed. J. C. Ghosh, Vol. II,

Calcutta, 1887, pp. 505-619; ibid. Panini Office edition (Allahabad, 1906), pp. 229-320; ibid. ed. Nag and Burman, Pt. III, Calcutta, 1947, pp. 1-61. It has been separately published under the editorship of Prof. Sushobhan Chandra Sarkar, unner the title *Rammohun Roy and Indian Economy* (Calcutta, 1965). Rammohun's views on India's contemporary agrarian and revenue problems as expressed in his evidence, have been commented upon at different times by Dr. Gyan Chand (noticed in *The Father of Modern India: Commemoration Volume of Rammohun Roy Centenary Celebrations, 1933*, Pt. I, p. 79); Mr. S.N. Sengupta, 'Economic Writings of Rammohun Roy' in *The Student's Rammohun Centenary Volume* (M. C. Sarkar & Sons, Calcutta, 1933 ?), pp. 72-78; Prof. S.C. Sarkar in his editorial introduction to *Rammohun Roy on Indian Economy*, Calcutta, 1965, pp. i-v; as well as in his Bengali article 'Arthaniti-charchay Rama-Mohana' in the *Tattvakanmudi* Maghotsava Number, 1373 B.S., pp. 38-43; Dr. B.N. Ganguli in his paper Rammohun Roy on India's contemporary Economic Problems', *Economic and Social Development: essays in honour of Dr. C.D. Deshmukh*, pp. 281-307; Dr. Bhabatosh Datta, *The Evolution of Economic Thinking in India*, Calcutta, 1962, pp. 4-6; and in his Bengali article 'Raja Rammohana-Raya O Bharatiya Arthaniti', *Visvabharati Patrika*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2, pp. 114-23.

2. The point has been very effectively put by Dr. B. Datta.

'১৮৩১ সালে সহসা প্রায় ষাট বৎসর বয়সে রামমোহন যে সুচিন্তিত ও সুসম্বদ্ধ রচনাগুলি লেখেন তার আগে কোনো প্রস্তুতি ছিল না এটা বিশ্বাস করা কঠিন। এবং লেখাতে যাঁর কার্পণ্য ছিল না, তিনি অর্থনীতি সম্পর্কে আগেই লিখেছেন এরকম মনে হওয়াই স্বাভাবিক। এবং ইংলণ্ডের পত্র-পত্রিকায়, নানা পণ্ডিতজনের সঙ্গে চিঠিপত্রে, সরকারের কাছে আবেদন ও প্রতিবেদনে রামমোহনের অর্থনৈতিক মতবাদের প্রাক্-১৮৩১ সাক্ষ্য খুঁজলে হয়তো পাওয়া যেতে পারে।'

Visvabharat, Patrika, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2, p. 123

3. The letter was collected by the late Brajendranath Benerji from Mr. P. F. Bowring, a descendant of Sir John Bowring and published in *The Modern Review*, June 1927, p. 764; it has been subsequently reprinted in *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, ed. Nag and Burman, Pt. IV, Calcutta 1947, pp. 113-14.

15

RAMMOHUN ROY'S LETTERS TO DAVID REED AND WILLIAM ALEXANDER

DILIP KUMAR BISWAS*

Rammohun Roy's correspondence with the Unitarian Christian circles of England and America had started with the beginning of the third decade of the nineteenth century and continued down to the year of his death. It was with the publication of his *The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness* in 1820 that the English and American Unitarians had begun to see in him a kindred spirit and the three *Appeals* to the 'Christian Public' that followed in the three succeeding years only confirmed their impression. The transfer of allegiance in 1821 from Orthodoxy to Unitarianism of William Adam, originally connected with the Baptist Missionary Society, had virtually taken the Christian world by storm. The event was considered a humiliating defeat in missionary circles since it had been brought about by the persuasive arguments of Rammohun Roy who in orthodox eyes was no more than "an intelligent Heathen whose mind is as yet completely opposed to the grand design of the Saviour's becoming incarnate." For exactly the same reason the Unitarian communities of England and America had hailed it as signifying a great triumph of truth and henceforth they came to regard India as a congenial ground for the advancement of the Unitarian cause against Trinitarian Orthodoxy.[1] Naturally, a

*Sanskrit College, Calcutta.

spate of correspondence with Rammohun Roy followed from their side. One of the most interesting and important letters belonging to this class is that of Rev. Henry Ware of Cambridge (U.S.A.) who had sent Rammohun a set of questions on the prospects of (Unitarian) Christianity 'and the means of promoting its reception' in India. To this, Rammohun had sent a detailed reply dated, Calcutta, February 2, 1824.[2]

Rammohun Roy's letter to David Reed, editor of the *Christian Register*, Boston, in reply to the letter's three specific questions, bears a close resemblance, as regards contents, to his aforementioned one to Rev. Henry Ware. The text of the letter was published in the *Christian Register*, dated Boston, Friday, May 7, 1824, p. 154. The letter itself is dated Calcutta, January 13, 1824, slightly earlier than Rammohun's reply to Rev. Ware which actually contains the following reference to it : "I should have answered your letter by the ship *Bengal*; but I regret to say, that my time and attention had been so much engrossed by constant controversies with polytheists both of the West and East, that I had only leisure to answer by that opportunity a short letter which I had the pleasure of receiving from Mr. Reed of Boston, and was obliged to defer a reply to your queries until the present occasion."[3] The letter as printed in the *Christian Register* is mentioned by Miss Adrienne Moore[4], but she does not quote the text. It is not included also in any of the published editions of Rammohun Roy's collected *English Works*. I have been fortunate enough to trace it recently in the files of the *Christian Register* following the clue provided by Miss Moore and am now publishing the text here. The manuscript of the letter is as yet untraced.

The editor of the *Christian Register*, Mr. David Reed, adds the following suitable introduction to the text of Rammohun's letter as published in the relevant issue of his paper (May 7, 1824):

"In April 1823, the Editor of this paper availed himself of the opportunity which offered, of direct conveyance to Calcutta, and addressed a respectful letter to Rammohun Roy. The principal object of which was to obtain his views relative to the following questions :

1. How far the doctrines of the *trinity*, *native depravity*, and other kindred doctrines of Calvinism, as held and taught

by the present missionaries, are obstacles to the introduction of Christianity among the Hindoos.

2. Whether there appears to be any insuperable obstacle, in the manner, habit or present belief of the native Hindoos, to the rational and simple doctrines of Christianity, as inculcated by unitarians ?
3. Whether gentlemen who should inculcate the doctrine of the Divine Unity, and the most plain and simple doctrines of Christianity, would probably meet with such success, either with Hindoos or Musulmans, as would justify any measures that might be taken for support of such teachers in any part of Hindostan ?

We have the satisfaction to state that we have just received an answer to the above-named letter, in which a particular reply is given to the questions now stated.

Considering the importance and the interesting character of the information which this letter contains, and the high authority from which it is derived, we think it proper to give it to our friends and the public. We trust our highly respected correspondent, in view of the interest that is felt here in everything that relates to Hindostan, will excuse the liberty we have taken."

Next is inserted the following text of Rammohun's letter :

Sir,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 29th April last, and know not how to describe the gratitude and unfeigned joy, which I have felt at the idea that, humble and remote as I am, I should have been kindly noticed by .... and that the principles, which have actuated me to render some trifling service to my countrymen, have met with the approbation of such persons as have fortunately had the advantage of free discussion in religious and political affairs, and really breathe the atmosphere of liberty. When I read this part of your letter, viz., "Knowing, as you do, the benevolent character of the religion of our blessed Master and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and the ennobling and purifying influence of the doctrine of one God of infinite perfections, who is the Author, Governor, and Friend of the universe, you will naturally expect that we who embrace this religion should feel a high degree of satisfaction on hearing that the doctrine of the DIVINE UNITY is taught and is beginning to prevail amongst the widely extended population of Hindostan",

my gratitude has become two-fold; as, notwithstanding the difference of nativity, habit, religion, government, complexion, and customs, you have so much at heart the interests of the natives of Hindoostan. May God pour his blessings upon that land of liberty, —that fountain of truth, which is distinguished by the liberal and philanthropic ideas of her children, such a yourself and others of the same principles.

In answer to your first query, I beg to refer you to the accompanying extracts* from the missionary works published in the latter end of the last year, which will show that the inculcation of the doctrine of the Trinity, by the Missionary Gentlemen, has not only rendered their labour unsuccessful, but has exposed the name of Christianity to ridicule among enlightened Hindoos and Moosulmans of this country. In reply to your second query, I beg to be allowed to refer you to the accompanying Essay†, published by a Brahmun of the first respectability in Catcutta, as declaring publicly that "we thould feel no reluctance to co-operate with them [Unitarian Christians] in religious matters, merely because they consider Jesus Christ as the Messenger of God and their spiritual teacher; for oneness in the object of worship and sameness of religious practice should produce attachment between the worshippers."

Besides you may perceive in a list of subscribers to an Unitarian Chapel in this city, that several natives of consequence have come forward as supporters of this Institution. The natives of Hindoostan, in common with those of other countries, are divided into two classes,—the ignorant and the enlightened; the number of the latter is, I am sorry to say, comparatively very few here; and to these men the idea of a triune God, a man God, and also the idea of the appearance of God, in the bodily shape of a dove, or that of the blood of God, seem entirely heathenish and absurd and consequently their sincere conversion to Christianity** must be morally impossible. But they would not scruple to embrace, or at least to encourage the Unitarian system of Christianity, were it inculcated on them in an intelligible manner.

The former class, I mean the ignorant among them, must be enemies to both the systems of Christianity,—Unitarianism and Trinitarianism—as they feel great reluctance in changing the deities worshipped by their fathers, for foreign gods, and in substituting the blood of God for the water of the Ganges, as a purifying

substance. At the same time the idea of an invisible Being, as the sole object of worship maintained by Unitarians, is foreign to their understanding. Under these circumstances it would be advisable, in my humble opinion, that one, or two, if not more, Gentlemen, well qualified to each English literature and sciences, and noted for their moral conduct, should be employed to improve the understandings of the present ignorant generation, and thereby improve their hearts in the progress of time, that the cause of truth may triumph over false religion, and the desired comfort and happiness may be enjoyed by men of all classes. The above statement is a reply to the third query mentioned in your letter, viz., "whether gentlemen who should inculcate the doctrine of DIVINE UNITY . . . . would probably meet with such success . . . as would justify any measures that might be taken for the support of such teachers in any part of Hindostan."

In my researches into the truths of Christianity, I placed no unqualified confidence in my own opinion; but I appealed to the understanding of many unbiassed, sensible, and independent Hindoos, who, upon an attentive study of the Old and New Testaments (as found arranged) have decided that these books treat of the unity of God and that the high and honorary terms applied to Jesus Christ and to the chiefs or Israel, are conformable to the usages of the Asiatic languages; and their decision has been, thank God, an unshaken confirmation of my inferences from the scriptual writings.

I now return my best thanks for the Christian Register of which you kindly made me a present, and which is now placed among the books of the Unitarian Library in Calcutta. I at the same time entreat your acceptance of the accompanying publication as a token of the greatest regard entertained by one, who, with the best wishes for your health and happiness, subscribes himself.

Your Most obedient servt.
Calcutta, Jan. 13, 1824 RAMMOHUN ROY

Three foot-notes are added to the letter by the editor—two of them elucidating Rammohun's references to extracts and tracts accompanying his letter, and one of his own. These are inserted below as marked by signs in the body of the letter :

*The extracts to which he alludes, are :

1. From the *Bengal Auxiliary Chronicle* of 1823, in which complaint is made, that certain persons who attend the missionary congregations at Mirzapore, "are led away by Socinian principles [All Unitarianism is stigmatized by the term Socinian]. We have found more opposition (says the Chronicle) from these persons, than even from professed idolators. For whilst the latter inquire only, 'which of the two systems is correct ?' the former declares they have forsaken idolatry, and at the same time despise the religion of Christ"

   Upon this statement, Rammohun Roy has the following remark :

   > "These persons [who are mentioned as] having been *led away by Socinian Principles*, cannot be supposed to have despised the religion of Christ. They perhaps despised the corruptions of the religion of Christ."

2. From the Fifth Annual Report of the Calcutta Baptist Missionary Society, January 10, 1823. In this extract the same complaint is made as in the preceding, though it is done more fully and more petulantly. It contains some remarks which we hope may have leisure, on some future occasion, to notice.

   It appears from the complaint which the missionaries make of the opposition of Unitarian natives, that they think it better that they remain idolaters than to embrace Christianity in any other form than in which it is proposed by them. They seem to intimate that the system is not to be compared with itself and its merits scanned, but is only to be put in contrast with Hindoo idolatry, and to be received or rejected, without examination, as offered by them,—the whole or none.

   †This is an eassy entitled "Humble suggestions to his countrymen who believe in the *One True God*"; by Prussunnu Koomar Thakoor. The design of this tract is explained by the following brief advertisement of the author :

   "My object in publishing this tract is to recommend those to whom it is addressed, to avoid using harsh or

abusive language in their intercourse with European Missionaries, either respecting them or the objects of their worship; however much this may be countenanced by the example of some of these Gentlemen.

P.K.T."

The extract which Rammohun Roy has here given from this Essay, is the only passage of any importance to the particular subject in view. It contains, however, some interesting statements which we shall notice on a future occasion.

Ed. Register

**Rammohun Roy undoubtedly here means Calvinistic Christianity.

The letter in many ways is an important one throwing light on the development of Rammohun Roy's ideas on Christianity and the prospects of its promotion in India. He was searching passionately for a universal basis of religious faith and had been thoroughly disgusted at the narrowness of outlook displayed by the orthodox Christian sects all around him. He had been drawn towards Unitarianism since it believed in the unity of Godhead and had become the principal patron of the Calcutta Unitarian Committee formed in 1821, along with eminent contemporaries like Dwarkanath Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore and others. Naturally hereafter he was gradually led into correspondence with votaries of Unitarianism in England and America. The present letter along with the following one to Rev. Ware is to be red with reference to this specific context. In the second, Rammohun deals with the same theme in greater detail and actually quotes a passage from the first.[5] The radical difference in outlook between Rammohun and the Unitarians was that the former was a universalist in religion and could not accept the exclusively 'Christian' outlook of contemporary Unitarianism. He was obliged to tell Rev. Ware, "There is one question at the concluding part of your letter, (to wit, "Whether it be desirable that the inhabitants of India be converted to Christianity, in what degree desirable, and for what reasons ?") which I pause to answer, as I am led to believe, from reason, what is set

forth in scripture, that "in every nation he that *feareth* God and worketh *righteousness* is accepted with him", in whatever form the worship he may have been taught to glorify God."[6] The expression 'Socinian principles' used in note I, refers to the teachings of Faustus Socinius (Fausto Sozzini in Italian), the celebrated Protestant scholar and author of the sixteenth century, whose followers do not accept the divinity of Christ in the orthodox sense. These have been regarded as the forerunners of modern Unitarianism.[7] The tract entitled *Humble Suggestions* mentioned as the work of 'Prussunnu Koomar Thakoor', is actually a product of Rammohun's own pen. Rammohun quite enjoyed publishing his own works under cover of pseudonyms or sometimes under names borrowed from the circle of his friends.[8] So far as the last note is concerned the editor is right in thinking that Rammohun had mainly Calvinistic Christianity in view, as his principal Christian opponents were the Baptist missionaries of Serampore who 'belonged to the narrowest school of Calvinistic orthodoxy.'[9]

Rammohun Roy's letter to William Alexander, dated July 16, 1831 is written from 5 Cumberland Terrace, Regent Park, London. He lived at this address during his stay in England, sometimes between the middle of June 1831 to the end of January 1832. The letter belongs to the class of Rammohun Roy's Unitarian correspondence, but is of a more personal nature than the one to Mr. Reed. Its text was printed in the *Christian Reformer or Unitarian Magazine*, London, Vol. III (1836), p. 466, three years after Rammohun's death. I have not been able to trace the manuscript. It is noticed by Miss A. Moore[10] but she gives the year of the Magazine as 1835 instead of 1836 and does not quote the text. It has not yet been included in any collection of Rammohun's works. I give the text below :

5, Cumberland Terrace, Regent's Park,
July 16th, 1831

My Dear Sir,

Our mutual friend, Dr. Bowring has communicated to me your long letter to his address, which I have read with interest as it completely recalls the recollection of our former correspondence.

I do not wonder that you should have felt surprise at my silence for some years, the cause of which can only be fully appreciated by those who know the troubles in which I was involved. They

were such that I entirely neglected my correspondence with Persia, England, America and every part of the world, as is well-known to my friends in various quarters, who complained of my neglect of their communications.

However, I thank the Supreme Author and Ruler of the universe, that, by a firm reliance on his goodness and overruling providence, which bring good out of evil, I have been enabled to survive and overcome these severe afflictions, and to learn from them lessons of resignation to the Divine Will, of humility and distrust of human strength, and the vain and transitory nature of all worldly affairs. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth;" by temporal calamities we are taught to withdraw the heart from things which are perishable and to fix it upon those which are eternal.

Since my arrival in England, I hape enjoyed an opportunity of seeing a very great number of our religious friends, and have reaped the highest gratification from associating with them in public and in private, at their social parties and in their public assemblies. I have attended the different places of worship with benefit and instruction. I rejoice to find that true religion is so well appreciated and in its purest form so fully attended by so large a proportion of the most intelligent and respectable part of the community. But in a free country like this, the institutions of which are every day making further advances towards prefection, truth must prevail over error, rational piety over bigotry, and the light of reason must ultimately dispel the clouds of superstition.

Owing to my indisposition, I was unable to answer your letter earlier; and express my gratitude for all the kind interest you have taken on my behalf. On my tour to the country, if I find it possible to take Yarmouth in my way, it will afford me infinite gratification to call upon you at your residence. In the meantime, wishing you speedy restoration to your usual strength and every success in life, I remain, with regard and esteem, my dear Sir.

Your most obediently
RAMMOHUN ROY

To W. Alexander, Esq.

It is clear from the text of the letter that Rammohun had previously corresponded with the addressee from India and the

communication had been interrupted due to "the troubles" in which he got involved. There is little doubt that "the troubles" consisted of the series of law-suits instituted against Rammohun and his elder son Radhaprasad Roy during the period from 1823 to 1826. The civil cases against Rammohun were dismissed with costs and Radhaprasad was acquitted. But the latter who had been charged with embezzlement of Government funds while serving as the Naib Sherishtadar of the Burdwan Collectorate, had to undergo a long period of torture and persecution before his acquittal which resulted in his mother dying broken-hearted and also in a complete break-down of Rammohun's health.[11] Naturally, these disturbances in his family life had prevented Rammohun from pursuing his foreign correspondence for a few years. He is found to mention the circumstances also in his letter to Dr. Lant Carpenter, dated London, 7 May, 1831[12] : "I regret extremely your disappointment regarding the letter which you mention having written to me while in India. I was for some years so much taken up with law proceedings in which part of my family was involved that I completely neglected my correspondence with Europe; so much that even your letter which I cannot call to recollection whether it was received or not." Another interesting point concerning the letter to William Alexander is Rammohun's reference to his "correspondence with Persia, England, America and every part of the world." His English and American correspondence is well-known. But the present source reveals that he had correspondents in Persia too. This is not surprising in view of the fact that he was an accomplished master of Persian. It may be noted in this connection that Rammohun's Persian weekly, the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, had probably some circulation in Persia as is indicated by the following passage from the English translation of its closing notice which appeared in the *Calcutta Journal*, April 10, 1823[13] : "I now entreat those kind and liberal gentlemen of Persia and Hindoostan who have honoured the Mirat-ool-ukhbar with their patronage, that in consideration of the reason above stated, they will excuse the non-fulfilment of my promise to make them acquainted with passing events, as stated in the introductory remarks in the first Number; . . . ." The reference to Persia in the letter thus opens up a new line of investigation regarding Rammohun Roy. In this connection, we have also to keep in mind the expression "every part of the world." One wonders

which other parts of the world besides Persia, England and America, were within the epistolary orbit of this remarkable man.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. S. D. Collect, *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy* (ed. D. K. Biswas and P. C. Ganguli), Calcutta, 1962, pp. 123-24.
2. *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy* (ed. K. D. Nag and D. Burman), Pt. IV, Calcutta, 1947, pp. 43-52.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
4. *Rammohun Roy and America*, Calcutta, 1942, p. 151.
5. *English Works*, Pt. IV, pp. 49-50.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
7. Wilbur, *Our Unitarian Heritage: An Introduction to the history of the Unitarian Movement*, Boston, 1926, p. 161.
8. Collect, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-42.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
10. *Rammohun Roy and America*, p. 72.
11. Collect, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52; the circumstances leading to the presecution and acquittal of Radhaprasad Roy have been ably described by R. P. Chanda and J. K. Mujumdar on the basis of Court records; cf. *Letters and Documents Relating to the Life of Raja Rammohun Roy*, Vol. I (1791-1830), Calcutta, 1938, pp. lxi-lxxxix, 315-522.
12. Published by the present writer in *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. LXXXIX, Part II (July-December, 1970), pp. 282-83.
13. Collect, *op. cit.* p. 456.

16

RAMMOHUN ROY AND HORACE HAYMAN WILSON

DILIP KUMAR BISWAS*

There has been as yet no systematic study of the subject of Rammohun Roy's association with his contemporary Western orientalists though ambitious attempts at estimating the influence of 'British Orientalism' on the 'Bengal Renaissance' are already in the field. It was, however, quite natural that Rammohun and the occidental scholars in Indology of his time would be drawn close to one another as the respective subjects of their investigation were in many ways identical. From the second half of the eighteenth century Western scholars (mostly British and connected in some way or other with the Indian administration of the Company) had begun their probe into the past history of Indian civilisation. Individual efforts had got solid organisational bases, academically, with the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 and, from a more utilitarian standpoint, with the foundation of the College of Fort William in 1800. Scholars like Wilkins, Jones, Colebrooke and others were not only assiduous students of classical oriental languages but they also gradually laid the foundation of scientific Indology by applying the test of the comparative and critical method to various branches of Indian studies. About the time when modern Indology was thus passing through its successive phases of infancy and adolescence another mental process—

* Sanskrit College, Calcutta.

indigenous, solitary and at the time totally unnoticed—was at work, which had for its object a complete understanding of the genius and ethos of the ancient and medieval Indian culture-complex. This was the lone quest of Rammohun Roy which had from all accounts started during the eighties of the eighteenth century if not earlier, and had left him a complete master of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Rammohun Roy was originally a deep student of the age-old wisdom of India and Islam through the original classical linguistic medium that he had been cultivating from his boyhood days by the traditional method at the indigenous seminaries of this country. All evidence points to the conclusion that he learnt English and began his incursions into the domain of European thought only when he was a mature young man in his twenties. Before this however, he had already made himself well-grounded in the Indian heritage and had acquired a direct insight into the process of working of the Indian tradition, both academic and popular. He had imbibed the critical spirit and outlook originally from a study of Islamic and Indian philosophical literature. When therefore a competent knowledge of English threw open before him the gates of Western learning, he could approach it in the capacity of a worthy representative of oriental thought. Common interest now gradually brought Rammohun and the Western orientalists together on many occasions in the common fields of their enquiry. There was however one important difference regarding their respective approaches to India's past. With the best among the Western Indologists it was the subject of a purely academic study, critical, objective and laborious, remaining confined mainly to the domain of the intellect. With Rammohun however, due to his characteristic early training, it had always been something more than mere academic knowledge; it was a part of the living experience,—something not only to be critically analysed by the intellectual process but also to be realised, reinterpreted, and readjusted to the needs of modern life. The underlying note of smooth confidence and even legitimate pride in the genuine core of Indian culture is unmistakable throughout his writings.

Inspite of this difference of outlook Rammohun was not slow to appreciate the high value of the work that was being done by the Western orientalists of his time. He utilised their works and cultivated the personal acquaintance of many of them. Thus, while

concluding his work entitled *A Translation into English of a Sanskrit Tract inculcating the Divine Worship* (1827), he quotes with enthusiastic approval William Jones' English translation of the *Gayatri* and pays eloquent tribute to the latter's academic acquisitions.[1] Again in the preliminary note to his work *Essay on the Rights of the Hindoos over Ancestral Property according to the Law of Bengal* (1830) he gratefully acknowledges his debt to William Jones' translation of *Manu* as well as to Colebrooke's translation of the *Dayabhaga* and of an extract from the *Mitakshara*;[2] though elsewhere he does not hesitate to correct Jones' translation of *Manu* II.22 with the help of the commentary.[3] In the preface to his English translation of the *Isopanishad* he refers (in a footnote) to the benefit he had derived from the use of Wilson's *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.[4] He was further in regular correspondence with M. Garcin de Tassy, the contemporary French Islamic scholar and the celebrated author of *Histoire de la literature Hindouie et Hindoustani* and later had an opportunity of meeting him at Paris in 1832. In one of his letters to de Tassy written (in Urdu) from London, dated August 1, 1831, he is found to express a desire to be introduced to M. Chezy, the contemporary French Sanskritist and translator into French of Kalidasa's Sakuntala.[5] Fanny Kemble, the English actress, received from him the present of a copy of William Jones' English translation of the same immortal play.[6] The other side was certainly not lacking in appreciation and recognition. As early as 1824 Rammohun Roy had been elected a corresponding member of the Societe Asiatique of France after M. Lanjuinais had published a detailed notice of him and his works in the August 1823 issue of the *Journal Asiatique* and after a three-member commission consisting of M. Lanjuianais, M. Klaproth and M. Burnouf had ponounced him fit for the honour by means of a patient investigation into his competence as a scholar.[7] During his stay in England Rammohun was an honoured guest at the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Royal Society of Great Britain and Ireland held on May 11, 1833.[8] In view of this relation of reciprocal cordiality and admiration existing between the distinguished Indian and the occidental scholars in Indology we are not surprised to find the former in friendly terms with H.H. Wilson, his eminent Calcutta contemporary—an Englishman and a servant of the Company—who had devoted his life to the study of Sanskrit literature.

Horace Hayman Wilson, (1786-1860) had his early training as

a medical student at the St. Thomas Hospital, London, and arrived in India in 1808 as a surgeon of the Company. His knowledge of chemistry and metallurgy helped him to secure the post of assistant to John Leyden at the Calcutta mint where he became the deputy assay-master in 1816. He had always a flair for languages and utilised his long stay in India (1808-1832) in acquiring a mastery of Sanskrit,—inspired no doubt by the examples of earlier and senior Indologists like Sir William Jones and Henry Thomas Colebrooke. Recognition of his merits as a Sanskritist was not long in coming. In 1832, he was appointed the first Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, joining later in 1836, as the Librarian, India Office Library, the post being then known as that of Librarian to the East India Company. He was an original member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland and became its Director in 1837 after the death of Colebrooke. In India, apart from his official work, his career as an educationist and orientalist was no less distinguished. He was intimately connected with the Asiatic Society and the Fort Williaim College; rose to be the Secretary, Committee of Public Instruction and exercised considerable influence on the administration of both the Hindu and the Sanskrit Colleges.

Wilson's Sanskritic studies extended alike to Vedic and classical fields and it may be conceded that by taste and temperatment he felt a more intense attraction for the latter.[9] To him we owe the first systematic study of classical Sanskrit poems and plays, a thorough and exhaustive analysis of Puranic literature, detailed notices of historical texts, medical and legal systems and also some appreciation of Indian inscriptions and coins. Inspite of the wideness of his interests and his undoubted sincerity of purpose he lacked the depth and critical acumen of Colebrooke and his output in the field of oriental studies, valuable as it is, leans more on the descriptive and expository side, than on the critical. In course of his Indological labour he had also imbibed a taste for the study of the philosophical and religious systems of the Hindus, presumably inspired by Colebrooke, and it is this field of academic enquiry that must have brought him and Rammohun Roy close to each other in the second decade of the nineteenth century.

Wilson's interest in Hindu philosophy and religion had inevitably led him to the Vedanta system which has been regarded as the crowning achievement in the realm of Brahmanical metaphysical speculations and he was naturally impressed by the genius of

Sankara Acharya, by far the most notable among the early exponents of this philosophy in India. The problem of determining Sankara's date had cropped up before him in connection with a critical examination of the story of the persecution of the Buddhists attributed by tradition to the philosopher. Colebrooke, who had already studied the problem independently, was inclined to give Sankara "an antiquity of about 1000 years", which actually placed the latter somewhere towards the close of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century. Wilson no doubt gave due weight to the arguments of Colebrooke, Taylor, Buchanan, Mackenzie and others on the subject,[10] but the individual who had been of the greatest help to him in his efforts to solve the problem of Sankara's date was Rammohun Roy.

Rammohun Roy had studied the Vedanta very thoroughly at Benaras and Rangpur and had settled down in Calcutta in 1815 as a mature exponent of this philosophical system as is evidenced by his series of publications from 1815 to 1820, in Bengali, Hindusthani and English. The quick successive appearances of the *Vedanta-Grantha* (1815; Bengali and Hindusthani), the *Vedantasara* (1815 or 1816; Bengali and Hindusthani), the *Talabakaropanishat* (*Kenopanishat*) (Text and Bengali Translation, 1816), the *Ishopanishat* (Text and Bengali Translation, 1816), the *Kathopanishat* (Text and Bengali Translation, 1817), the *Mandukyopanishat* (Text and Bengali Translation, 1817), the *Mundakopanishat* (Text and Bengali Translation, 1819), *An Abridgment of the Vedant* (1816), *Auflosung des Wedant* [German Translation of the previous work, (1817)], *Cena Upanishad* (Eng. Trans., 1816), *Ishopanishad* (Eng. Trans., 1816), *Moonduk Opunishad* (Eng. Trans., 1819) and the *Kut'h-Opunishud* (Eng. Trans., 1819), had established his reputation as the unrivalled Vedanta scholar of the day in Indian and European circles. He had held Sankara always in high veneration and had generally adhered to the *advaita* tradition in his own interpretation of the *Brahmasutra* and translation of the Upanishads, though on some points he had also the courage to differ from the master.[11] Contemporary academic opinion was not far wrong in its estimate of him as a disciple of Sankara and actually Rammohun never failed to acknowledge such discipleship himself. He had even taken pains to publish the first printed edition of Sankara's celebrated commentary on the *Brahmasutras* entitled *Sarirakamimamsa* from Calcutta in 1818. It is, therefore, no wonder that

among the contemporary Indian intellectuals Wilson had considered Rammohun Roy the most suitable person for answering some of his queries regarding Sankara and had approached him accordingly. He must have become intimate with Rammohun since the latter's settlement in Calcutta in 1815 or even earlier, for Rammohun had kept up regular touch with the city even when he had to live in the districts in the service of the Company.

In the preface to his well-known *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* Wilson makes two specific references to Rammohun Roy's views on two different problems connected with the life of Sankara. One is of course the problem of the latter's date and the other refers to the story of the alleged persecution of the Buddhists by the philosopher. On the first point, while discussing the views of Taylor and Colebrooke, he says :

> "Dr. Taylor thinks that if we allow him about 9 [?] 00 years we shall not be far from the truth, and Mr. Colebrooke is inclined to give him an antiquity of about 1000 years; this last is the age which my friend Rammhoun Roy, a diligent student of Sancara's works and philosophical teacher of his doctrines, is disposed to concur in and he infers, that 'from a calculation of the spiritual generations of the followers of Sancara Swami from his time upto this date, he seems to have lived between the seventh and eighth centuries of the Christian era."[12]

The portion quoted may be an extract from a letter or, less probably, from an unknown publication of Rammohun Roy. As to the question of a proper assessment of the tradition regarding Sankara's persecution of the Buddhists, Wilson admits the inadequancy of his own knowledge of Vedanta literature and the academic superiority of Rammohun Roy in this regard, as he says,

> "Although the popular belief attributes the origin of the *Bauddha* persecution to Sancara Acharya, yet in this case we have some reason to distrust its accuracy : opposed to it, we have the mild character of the reformer who is described as uniformly gentle and tolerant, and speaking from my own limited reading in *Vedanti* works, and the more satisfactory testimony of Rammohun Roy, which he permits me to adduce,

it does not appear that any trace of his being instrumental to any persecution, are to be found in his own writings".[13]

These statements show that Rammohun's views on the subject were considered important and helpful by Wilson.

The evidence is however still too scanty in itself to satisfy our curiosity as to the entire significance of the dialogue that must have passed between the two contemporaries on the subject. Fortunately I have come across in recent months fresh material giving us interesting details about Wilson's queries and Rammohun's specific answers to them, in the shape of two hitherto unpublished letters of the latter which I have been able to trace among the Wilson Papers now held in the collection of the India Office Library, London.[14]

The two letters written by Rammohun Roy to Wilson are dated respectively August 9, 1819 and September 29, 1819. The dates are interesting because we had so far known only two English letters of Rammohun written before 1820, viz., his letter to Lord Minto, protesting against the conduct of Sir Frederick Hamilton, Collector of Bhagalpur, dated 12 April 1809, and the one to John Digby written sometime in 1816 or 1817, an extract from which is printed in the preface to the edition of the *Abridgment of the Vedant* and the *Cena Upanishad*, published in a combined volume by the latter from London in 1817. The theme of both the letters to Wilson is the same, viz., the age of Sankara. The signature of Rammohun at the end of the first letter has become completely illegible due to the ink having soaked through the paper; but there is absolutely no doubt as to the authorship as the second letter bearing his distinct signature is plainly a continuation of the first and undoubtedly presupposes it. Besides on the back occurs the entry of the name 'Rammohun Roy' and the references contained in the letter tally exactly with Rammohun Roy's specific publication indicated. The following are the texts of the letters.

I

My dear Sir,

As I am in sanguine expectation of procuring during the present week the loan of an authenticated work denoting the series of Sunkur's spiritual successors which may settle the question respecting his age beyond every doubt and as you are not in urgent haste about the subject I think it prudent to postpone the benefit of your company until Monday next, when I have every reason to hope that we may come to a final determination.

Allow me to refer you to line fifteen page 185 of the Sunkur-Bhashya where you may find the word *Jainu* itself and also to line 9 page 184 which contains the word *Arhutu* synonymous to *Jainu.*

The work Muhavakya does not appear to be a modern one, but I have not yet been able to ascertain its age. I will however bring the book with me on Monday; in the meantime I remain

Yours sincerely

Doctor H.H. Wilson Balloogunge [signature blurred, almost wiped out]

Rammohun Roy Aug. 9 [?] 1819

বে। দ্বি। দ্বি। ভা॥ ১৮৪

অবধৃতস্বভাবানামতথাভাবপ্রসঙ্গঃ। এবং জীবাদিষু পদার্থেষ্বেকস্মিন্ ধর্ম্মিণি সত্ত্বাসত্ত্বয়োর্বিরুদ্ধয়োরসম্ভবাৎ সত্ত্বেচৈকস্মিন্ ধর্মেহসত্ত্বস্য ধর্ম্মান্তরস্যাসম্ভবাদসত্ত্বেচৈবং সত্ত্বস্যাসম্ভবাদসঙ্গতমিদমার্হতং মতং। এতেনৈকানেকনিত্যানিত্যব্যতিরিক্তাব্যতিরিক্তাদ্যনেকান্তাভ্যুপগমানিরাকৃতামন্তব্যাঃ। যত্তু পুদ্গলসংজ্ঞকেভ্যোহণুভ্যঃ সঙ্ঘাতাঃ সম্ভবন্তীতিকল্পয়ন্তি তৎপূর্ব্বেণৈবাণুবাদনিরাকরণেন নিরাকৃতম্ভবতীত্যতোন পৃথক্তন্নিরাকরণায় প্রযত্যতে ॥ ● ॥ এবং চাত্মাকার্ৎস্ন্যং ॥ ৫ ॥ ৩৪ ॥ যথৈকস্মিন্ ধর্ম্মিণি বিরুদ্ধধর্ম্মাসম্ভবো দোষঃ স্যাদ্বাদে প্রসক্তঃ এবমাত্মনোপি জীবস্যাকার্ৎস্ন্যমপরো দোষঃ প্রসজ্যেত। কথং শরীরপরিমাণো হি জীব ইত্যার্হতা মন্যন্তে। শরীরপরিমাণতায়াঞ্চ সত্যামকৃৎস্নোহসর্ব্বগতঃ পরিচ্ছিন্ন আত্মেত্যতো ঘটাদিবদনিত্যত্বমাত্মনঃ প্রসজ্যেত। শরীরাণাঞ্চানবস্থিতপরিমাণত্বান্মনুষ্যজীবো মনুষ্যশরীরপরিমাণো ভূত্বা পুনঃ কেনচিৎ কর্ম্মবিপাকেন হস্তিজন্ম প্রাপ্নুবন্ন কৃৎস্নং হস্তিশরীরং ব্যাপ্নুয়াৎ পুত্তিকাজন্ম চ প্রাপ্নুবন্ন কৃৎস্নঃ পুত্তিকাশরীরে সম্মীয়েত। সমান এব একস্মিন্নপি জন্মনি কৌমারযৌবনস্থাবিরেষু দোষঃ। স্যাদেতৎ অনন্তাবয়বো জীবঃ তস্য ত এবাবয়বা অল্পে শরীরে সঙ্কুচেয়ুর্মহতি চ বিকসেয়ুরিতি। তেষাং পুনরনন্তানাং জীবাবয়বানাং সমানদেশত্বং প্রতিহন্যতে বা নবেতি বক্তব্যং। প্রতিঘাতে তাবন্নানন্তাবয়বাঃ পরিচ্ছিন্নে দেশে সম্মীয়েরন্। অপ্রতিঘাতেপ্যেকাবয়বদেশত্বোপপত্তেঃ সর্ব্বেষামবয়বানাং প্রথিমানুপপত্তের্জীবস্যাণুমাত্রত্বপ্রসঙ্গঃ স্যাৎ। অপিচ শরীরমাত্রপরিচ্ছিন্নানাং জীবাবয়বানামানন্ত্যং নোৎপ্রেক্ষিতুমপি শক্যং। অথ পর্য্যায়েণ বৃহচ্ছরীরপ্রতিপত্তৌ কেচিজ্জীবাবয়বা উপগচ্ছন্তি তনুশরীরপ্রতিপত্তৌ চ কেচিদপগচ্ছন্তীত্যুচ্যেত তত্রাপ্যুচ্যতে ॥ ৩ ॥ নচপর্য্যায়াদপ্যবিরোধো বিকারাদিভ্যঃ ॥ ● ॥ ৩৫ ॥ নচপর্য্যায়েণাপ্যবয়বোপগমাপগমাভ্যামেতদ্দেহপরিমাণত্বং জীবস্যাবিরোধেনোপপাদয়িতুং শক্যতে কুতঃ বিকারাদিদোষপ্রসঙ্গাৎ। অবয়বোপগমাপগমাভ্যাং হ্যনিশমাপূর্য্যমাণস্যাপক্ষীয়মাণস্য চ জীবস্য বিক্রিয়াবত্ত্বং তাবদপরিহার্য্যং বিক্রিয়াবত্ত্বে চর্ম্মাদিবদনিত্যত্বং প্রসজ্যেত ততো বন্ধমোক্ষাভ্যুপগমো বাধ্যেত কর্ম্মাষ্টকপরিবেষ্টিতস্য জীবস্যালাবুবৎ সংসারসাগরে নিমগ্নস্য বন্ধনোচ্ছেদাদূর্দ্ধগামিত্বং ভবতীতি ॥ কিঞ্চান্যৎ আগচ্ছতামপ...

বে। দ্বি। দ্বি পা ॥ ১৮৫

তাংশ্চাবয়বানাগমাপায়ধর্ম্মবত্ত্বাদেবানাত্মত্বং শরীরাদিবৎ। ততশ্চাবস্থিতঃক
শ্চিদবয়ব আত্মেতি স্যাৎ নচসনিরূপয়িতুং শক্যতেঽয়মসাবিতি। কিঞ্চান্যৎ আ
গচ্ছন্তশ্চৈতে জীবাবয়বাঃ কুতঃ প্রাদুর্ভবন্তি অপগচ্ছন্তশ্চ ক্ব বা লীয়ন্ত ইতি বক্তব্যং। নহি
ভূতেভ্যঃ প্রাদুর্ভবেয়ুর্ভূতেষু চ নিলীয়েরন অভৌতিকত্বাজ্জীবস্য। নাপি কশ্চিদন্যঃ
সাধারণোঽসাধারণো বা জীবানামবয়বাধারো নিরূপ্যতে প্রমাণাভাবাৎ। কিঞ্চা
ন্যৎ অনবধৃতস্বরূপশ্চৈবং সত্যাত্মা স্যাৎ আগচ্ছতামপগচ্ছতাঞ্চাবয়বানামনিয়
তপরিমাণত্বাৎ। অতএবমাদিদোষপ্রসঙ্গান্ন পর্য্যায়েণাপ্যবয়বোপগমাপগমাবা
ত্মন আশ্রয়িতুং শক্যেতে। অথবা পূর্ব্বেণ সূত্রেণ শরীরপরিমাণস্যাত্মন উপচিতাপ
চিতশরীরান্তরপ্রতিপত্তাবকার্ৎস্ন্যপ্রসঞ্জনদ্বারেণানিত্যতায়াং চোদিতায়াং
পুনঃ পর্য্যায়েণ পরিমাণানবস্থানেঽপি স্রোতঃসন্তাননিত্যতান্যায়েনাত্মনো নিত্যতা
স্যাৎ যথা রক্তপটাদীনাং বিজ্ঞানানবস্থানেঽপি তৎসন্তাননিত্যতা তদ্বদ্বিসিচাম
পীত্যাশঙ্ক্যানেন সূত্রেণোত্তরমুচ্যতে। সন্তানস্য তাবদবস্তুত্বে নৈরাত্ম্যবাদপ্রসঙ্গঃ
বস্তুত্বেঽপ্যাত্মনো বিকারাদিদোষপ্রসঙ্গাদস্য পক্ষস্যানুপপত্তিরিতি ॥ ● ॥ অন্ত্যাব
স্থিতেশ্চোভয়নিত্যত্বাদবিশেষঃ ॥ ● ॥ ৩৬ ॥ অপিচান্ত্যস্য মোক্ষাবস্থাভাবিনো
জীবপরিমাণস্য নিত্যত্বমিষ্যতে জৈনৈঃ তদ্বৎ পূর্ব্বয়োরপ্যাদ্যমধ্যময়োর্জীবপরিমা
ণয়োর্নিত্যত্বপ্রসঙ্গাদবিশেষপ্রসঙ্গঃ স্যাৎ একশরীরপরিমাণতৈব স্যাৎ নোপচিতা
পচিতশরীরান্তরপ্রাপ্তিঃ। অথবান্ত্যস্য জীবপরিমাণস্যাবস্থিতত্বাৎ পূর্ব্বয়োরপ্য
বস্থয়োরবস্থিতপরিমাণ এব জীবঃ স্যাৎ। ততশ্চাবিশেষেণ সর্ব্বদৈবাণুর্মহান্বা জী
বোঽভ্যুপগন্তব্যো ন শরীরপরিমাণঃ। অতশ্চ সৌগতবদার্হতমপি মতমসঙ্গতমিত্যু
পেক্ষিতব্যং ॥ ● ॥ পত্যুরসামঞ্জস্যাৎ ॥ ● ॥ ৩৭ ॥ ইদানীং কেবলাধিষ্ঠাত্রীশ্ব
রকারণবাদঃ প্রতিষিধ্যতে। তৎকথমবগম্যতে। প্রকৃতিশ্চ প্রতিজ্ঞাদৃষ্টান্তানুপরো
ধাৎ অভিধ্যোপদেশাচ্চ ইতি প্রকৃতিভাবেনাধিষ্ঠাতৃভাবেন চোভয়স্বভাবস্যেশ্বরস্য
স্বয়মেবাচার্য্যেণ প্রতিষ্ঠাপিতত্বাৎ। যদি পুনরবিশেষেণেশ্বরকারণবাদমাত্রমিহ প্র
তিষিধ্যেত পূর্ব্বোত্তরবিরোধাদ্ব্যাহতাভিব্যাহারঃ সূত্রকার ইত্যেতদাপদ্যেত। ত
স্মাদপ্রকৃতিরধিষ্ঠাতা কেবলং নিমিত্তকারণমীশ্বর ইত্যেষ পক্ষো বেদান্তবিহিতব্রহ্মৈক
ত্বপ্রতিপক্ষত্বাদ্যত্নেনাত্র প্রতিষিধ্যতে। সা চেয়ং বেদবাহ্যেশ্বরকল্পনানেকপ্রকারা। কে

The pages of Sankara's Bhasya mentioned in Rammohun Roy's first letter.
Sanskrit College Library, Calcutta.

II

My dear Sir,

In ascertaining the age of Sunkuracharyu it now remains for us to fill up the time from him to Chaitanyu with the spiritual generations from the former down to the latter or to find out the exact age of Baikoonth Poori the author of the accompanying Dvadushu [?] Mahavakyu. Baikoonth not being so celebrated as Chaitanyu, I have not yet been able to discover his age and altho I have after a long research procured a list of the spiritual progenitors of Keshuvu Bharuthi the teacher of Chaitunyu in his Sanyus order upto Sunkur and from him back to Nurayun and another stating the name of Madhuvendru Poori, who is supposed by the Vaishnuvas of Bengal to have instructed Chaitanyu in Vishnoo doctrines before he received the order of Sanyus, with the names of his spiritual fathers upto Madhuv and from him to Nurayun; but the contradiction between these two series is so obvious and irreconcilable that I felt ashamed to send them to you as the former means the names of 39 generations from Chaitunyu to Vishnoo and the latter only twenty. With a view to correct this inconsistency I wrote about a month ago to an acquaintance of mine at Benares on the subject who has I believe a correct list of Sunkur's generations to the present time (They as far as my recollection extends are thirty and odd in number) but I have not yet received an answer from him. I therefore venture to send you those lists as matters of curiosity and not as affording information to be relied upon—I am at the same time really sorry that in return for the advantages which I daily derive from your most valuable Sungscrit Dictionary and for the friendly attention which you have so often shown me, I have not been able to render you the trifling service you required of me in this instance.

September 29th, 1819

Yours very sincerely
I remain
Rammohun Roy

[on the back]
Doctor H.H. Wilson
Baloogunge

Rammohun Roy
Sept. 1819.

My Dear Sir

In ascertaining the age of
Sunkuracharya it now remains for us
to fill up the time from him to Chaitunya
with the spiritual generations from the
former down to the latter or to find out the
exact age of Baikoontha Poore the author
of the accompanying Bhutadeeshu Praka=
rakya – Baikoontha not being so celebrated
as Chaitunya I have not yet been able
to discover his age although I have after long
research procured a list of the series
of the spiritual progenitors of Keshuva
Bharuthi the teacher of Chaitunya in
his Sunyas order up to Sunkura & from him
back to Nurayuna & another stating the
name of Madhusoodunu Poore who

supposed by the Vaishnavs of Bengal
to have instructed Chaitanya in religious
doctrines before he received the order
of Sunyas, with the names of his Collective
[illegible] spiritual fathers up to Ma:
:dhava & from him to Narayun; but
the contradiction between these two lists
is so obvious & irreconcilable that I
felt ashamed to send them to you, as
the former bears the names of 39 - ge:
:nerations from Chaitanya to Vishnu
& the latter only of twenty — With a view
to correct this inconsistency I wrote about
a month ago to an acquaintance of mine
at Benares on the subject who has I
believe a correct list of successive ge:
:nerations to the present time (they as far
as my recollection extends are twenty
seven in number). but I have not yet

received an answer from him I therefore ventured to send you these letters as matter of curiosity and not as affording infor-mation to be relied upon — I am at the same time really sorry that in return for the advantages which I daily derive from your most valuable Sungscrit Dictionary & for the friendly attention which you have so often shown me I have not been able to render you the trifling service you required of me in this instance.

I am Sir
Yours very sincerely
Rammohun Roy

Septr 29th 1819

Doctor H. H. Wilson
Bolaugunge

The letters help to clarify the cryptic acknowledgments made by Wilson of his debt to Rammohun Roy in the Preface to his *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. The first indicates that the orientalist had been engaged in a discussion with Rammohun over the question of Sankara's date and the latter had suggested adoption of the method of calculating the spiritual generations of *guruparampara* from Sankara downward to his own time for arriving at a definite conclusion on the subject. It appears also that Wilson had asked for specific references to the Jaina sect in Sankara's commentary on the *Brahmasutra* and Rammohun is seen furnishing him with two clear instances. It is interesting to note that Rammohun refers to his own edition of Sankara's great commentary which he had published from Calcutta in 1818 under the title *Sarirakamimamsa*.[15] The first reference is to the following passage :

> '*Apichantyasyamokshavasthabhavino Jivaparimanasya nityatvamisyate jainaih. . . .*
>
> Sankara on the *Brahmasutra* II.2.36

The reference is found on comparison to tally exactly with the fifteenth line on page 185 of Rammohun's edition of Sankara's *Bhasya*. The second passage referred to is the following :

> *Katham sariraparimano hi jiva ityarhata manyante*
>
> Sankara on the *Brahmasutra* II.2.34

Once again the line tallies correctly with line 9, page 184 of Rammohun's text. Rammohun had to mention the page and line instead of adopting the usual practice of pointing to the *adhyaya*, *pada* and the *sutra* probably because his edition of the text of Sankara's *Bhasya* was printed manuscript-fashion on a straight line composition. The reference to the work *Muhavakya* (*Mahavakya*) is elaborated in the following letter.

Obviously as the second letter shows Rammohun was not himself satisfied with the two lists of spiritual generations which he was able to procure for the purpose. He mentions the contradictions existing between the two series and sends them to Wilson only as curiosities not to be relied upon as true. He was however still fully convinced of the efficacy of the method of counting spiritual generations in order to solve the problem of Sankara's date and refers the question to a safer authority at Benares. Two points may be noted in this connection. The method of determining chronology

by calculating on the basis of succession lists, both political and spiritual, is one applied by some modern critical scholars to the study of ancient Indian history and Rammohun to certain extent anticipates them here by his cautious and comparative approach to the different lists of Sankara's spiritual successors he was handling. Further his reference to a scholar at Beneras whom he personally knew and the material in whose possession he had clearly consulted earlier possibly strengthens the supposition that his Vedantic studies were connected in some way or other with Beneras, the greatest contemporary centre of Vedantic learning in Northern India. The second letter also reveals Rammohun as a firm believer in the possibility that the spiritual ancestry of Chaitanya can be traced back to Sankara, the *advaita* philosopher; or in other words the rich and colourful emotionalism of the Gaudiya Vaishnava School had a background of pure monism however much that school might have denounced *advaita* in course of its later development ! He had actually, as he says, searched out a list of spiritual progenitors of Kesava Bharati, the *sanyasa-guru* of Chaitanya upward to Sankara himself. It may be remembered that he had very effectively pressed this point in the dispute with his orthodox Vaishnava opponent in the following passage of his tract *Gosvamir sahii Bichar* (1818) :[16]

যদ্যপিও ভগবান আচার্য্যের কৃত ভাষ্যকে মোহের নিমিত্ত করিয়া কহা নস্তেরি দুষ্কৃতের কারণ হয় তথাপি বিশেষ করিয়া চৈতন্যদেব সম্প্রদায়ের বৈষ্ণবদিগ্যের অত্যন্ত অপরাধজনক হইবেক, যেহেতু পূজ্যপাদ ভগবান ভাষ্যকারের শিষ্যানুশিষ্য প্রণালীতে কেশব ভারতী ছিলেন, সেই কেশব ভারতীর শিষ্য চৈতন্যদেব হয়েন, আর শ্রীধরস্বামীও পূজ্যপাদ সম্প্রদায়ের শিষ্যশ্রেণীতে ছিলেন, তাঁহার কৃত গীতা প্রভৃতির টীকা বৈষ্ণব সম্প্রদায়ে কি অন্য সম্প্রদায়ে সর্ব্বথা মান্য, এবং চৈতন্যদেবও ঐ টীকাকে মান্য করিয়াছেন, আর সেই শ্রীধরস্বামী স্বয়ং গীতার টীকাতে লিখেন যে—ভাষ্যকার-মতং সম্যক্ তদ্ব্যাখ্যাতৃর্গিরস্তথা, ইত্যাদি।...অতএব ভগবান আচার্য্যের মত মোহের কারণ হয় এমৎ কহিলে চৈতন্যদেব ও শ্রীধরস্বামী প্রভৃতি সেই সম্প্রদায়ের সন্ন্যাসী-দিগ্যে মুগ্ধ করিয়া স্বীকার করিতে হইবেক আর আচার্য্যমতানুসারে যে সকল শ্রীধরস্বামীর টীকা তাহারা বা কি প্রকারে মান্যতা হইতে পারে অতএব আচার্য্যের নিন্দা করাতে এতদ্দেশীয় বৈষ্ণবদিগ্যের ধর্ম্মের ক্রমে মূলোচ্ছেদ হইয়া যায়।

Among modern scholars Dr. S.K. De after a very thorough analysis of the Gaudiya Vaishnava literature and tradition, has reached the same conclusion regarding the intellectual and spiritual background of Chaitanyism, perhaps[17] without being aware that Rammohun had anticipated him more than a century ago. This

view is opposed to the later Gaudiya tradition which seeks to connect the school with Madhva, the well-known dualist (*dvaitavadin*) Vaishnava philosopher of South India. The attitude is reflected in the *guru-parampara* lists of Chaitanya contained in the works of Gaudiya Vaishnava authors like Paramananda Kavikarnapurn (16th century) and Baladeva Vidyabhusana (18th century).[18] It is possible that the second list of spiritual teachers from Madhavendra Puri up to Madhava and from him to Narayana mentioned by Rammohun was an incomplete version of this sectarian series but we cannot be sure. The text *Mahavakya* mentioned in both letters (more elaborately as *Dvadasa-Mahavakya* in the second) and attributed to Vaikuntha Puri, apparently an ascetic author of the Sankarite order, cannot be identified. In the Government Sanskrit College Library, there is a small book written in Sanskrit prose on the theme of *Advaita Vedanta* entitled *Mahavakyavivaranam* which is attributed apparently without justification to Parivrajakacharya Sankara and published from Beneras in Samvat 1931, (*i.e.*, about 1874). In the concluding sentence the title is described as *Dvadasa Mahavakyavivaranam.*[19] Rammohun was certainly referring to a text of this type. The resemblance of the respective titles is indeed striking. But unfortunately as yet we know nothing of Vaikuntha Puri or his work mentioned in Rammohun's letter and it is not safe to suggest identification. The reference to Madhavendra Puri as the *diksha-guru* of Chaitanya is apparently a slip or oversight as Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition is uniform on the point that the ascetic who initiated Chaitanya into Vishnumantra at Gaya was not Madhavendra but his disciple Isvara Puri.

Analysis of the contents of Rammohun's above letters reveals the picture of two scholars working in close collaboration to unravel the mystery of Sankara's date. Rammohun is quite justifiably considered by Wilson an expert in the subject and the former also shows himself willing and eager to preffer all help he can. This naturally gives rise to an intellectual friendship, glimpses of which are found reflected in the generous acknowledgment made by Wilson in the preface to his *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. The story of this joint effort was not unknown to contemporary orientalist circles and Colebrooke speaking of Sankara said :

> "The most distinguished scholiast of these *sutras* in modern estimation is the celebrated Sancara Acharya, the founder of a

sect among the Hindus which is yet the most prevalent. I have had a former occasion of discussing the antiquity of the eminent person; and the subject has been since examined by Rama Mohen Raya and by Mr. Wilson."[20]

It is sad however to ponder that this close association did not prove lasting and the two friends gradually began to drift apart probably soon after 1820. We have no direct but only circumstantial knowledge of the cause of the rift. The Hindu College had been established in 1817 and Rammohun Roy had been deliberately kept out of the Board of Directors by the orthodox Hindu clique. Wilson, however, was associated with the institution and this as will as his reputation as a Sanskritist brought him very close to stubborn religious and social opponents of Rammohun like Radhakanta Deb and Dewan Ramcomul Sen. Gradually Wilson allowed himself to be identified with the latter group and this could not but have generated a feeling of aloofness between the two former friends without of course yet causing an open breach. Two subsequent factors that must have hastened the process of mutual alienation were the establishment of the Government Sanskrit College in Calcutta in 1824 and the passing of the anti-*Sati* legislation by Lord William Bentinck in 1829. Rammohun's famous letter of protest to Lord Amherst over the Sanskrit College issue is well-known, while Wilson had plunged himself heart and soul into the cause of the orientalist ideal in education. The final breach must have occurred over the question of abolition of *Sati*. On this question there seems to have been in some respects a fundamental difference of outlook between the two. With Rammohun, the practice besides being inhuman, had no sanction of the Hindu scriptures behind it. It is strange however to find that Wilson while admitting the inhumanity of the rite, regarded it as an injunction prescribed by Hindu scriptural authority and categorically opposed the abolition proposal. In his letter to Captain R. Benson, military secretary to Bentinck, dated November 25, 1828, he makes his position quite clear :

"The practice should be considered by itself : not in connexion with rites, to which it bears no analogy, and from the successful counteraction of which no safe guide can be derived. The sacrifice of infants at Sagor was not only unauthorised by any part of the Hindu Code, but was found upon inquiry to be

'neither countenanced by the religious orders, nor the people at large, or at any time sanctioned by the Hindu or Mahommedan Governments'. It was also necessarily of rare and restricted occurrence. This therefore affords no parallel to the performance of an act [*Sati*] observed throughout India for many ages, under every form of Government, and enjoined by texts which all orthodox Hindus regard as holy. . . . Manu is silent on the subject of concremation. Other authorities however of equal sanctity are sufficiently explicit, and the act is enumerated by them amongst the duties of a faithful widow just as much as chastity is held to be the duty of a virtuous wife. . . . They have therefore the weight of commands . . . . and they cannot be directly opposed without violence to the conscientious belief of every order of Hindus".

And then he proceeds to have a dig at his erstwhile friend and openly takes up the cudgel on behalf of the orthodox votaries of the evil custom :

"One or two individuals in Calcutta who have signalised themselves by dessenting from many of the practices and principles of the religion, may hold a different persuation, but the vast body of the population will concur in the same impression and the Government has to legislate not for a handful of sectaries but for the Hindus at large.''[21]

Thus, Wilson had completely cut himself off from Rammohun Roy as well as the social and religious ideals the latter stood for and openly identified himself with the orthodox *Dharma Sabha* group who considered Rammohun an apostate and a social outcast. Unfortunately he did not stop here. The passing of Bentinck's anti-*Sati* regulation had caused great excitement and feeling of hostility in the conservative circles and a petition had been submitted on their behalf to the Governor-General protesting against the measure, signed by about 800 eminent persons including a number of orthodox *pandits* on January 14, 1830. Strangely enough the list of signatories included the name of Pandit Ramchandra Vidyavagis, one of the faithful followers of Rammohun Roy. Some light is thrown on this mystery by the following extract from an undated letter of James Calder, a Calcutta merchant, to Captain Benson, military secretary to Bentinck ;

"Ramchandra Sarma head pundit of the College [Sanskrit College] who is of Rammohun Roy's school and was expected to sign the address of the abolitionists has been prevailed upon to sign the anti-abolitionist petition, but I am afraid his real sentiments are with the abolitionists. Ramcomul Sen is leading away all those connected with the College to oppose the abolition out of compliment to H.H. Wilson to whom he owes many things."[22]

It is indeed a pity that Wilson by now was engaged in playing patron to the conservative coterie to the extent of inspiring such vulgar intrigues. The breach with Rammohun Roy was now not only complete but public. So far as our knowledge goes, throughout the period Rammohun had maintained a dignified silence which was not once broken by any hostile utterance or action. Only once do we find him referring to Wilson in course of his talk to the Hindu students of Alexander Duff's school on January 13, 1830, who were at first unwilling to read the Bible and the reference though casual is respectful :

"Christians like Dr. Horace Hayman Wilson have studied the Hindu Shastras and you know that he has not become a Hindu. I myself have read all the Koran again and again; and has that made me a Mussalman ? Nay, I have studied the whole Bible and you know I am not a Christian. Why then, do you fear to read it ? Read it and judge for yourself."[23]

As for the lost act of the drama, the curtain rises in England. Rammohun had reached that country in April 1831 and spent the last three years of his life there. Wilson had followed him in 1832 to take up the post of the Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford. It is strange that though we have nearly a full record of Rammohun's activities and contacts during the three years of his stay in England we do not hear of any instance except one, a few days before his death, of his meeting Wilson. However, a few extracts of Wilson's letters to Dewan Ramcomul Sen from England are quoted by the latter's biographer and the following among them refer to Rammohun in a distant and aloof manner :[24]

June 27, 1833 : I have not yet seen Rammohun Roy and do not know what he is about. London is a wide place and all the

people are in such a bustle and so exclusively engaged in their own concerns that an individual finds himself quite lost and utterly insignificant amidst the mighty mass.

October 9, 1833 [referring to Rammohun's death] : He had no intention of returning immediately and Fate ordained that he should not return at all. I am very sorry for it. He would have come back a more reasonable man much more moderate in his views than he was in quitting India.

December 21, 1833 : In a letter I wrote to you I mentioned the death of Rammohun Roy. Since then I have seen Mr. Hare's brother and had some conversation with him on the subject. Rammohun died of brain fever; he had grown very stout and looked full and flushed when I saw him. It was thought he had the liver, and his medical treatment was for that and not for determination to the head. It appears also that mental anxiety contributed to aggravate his compliment. He had become embarassed for money, and was obliged to borrow of his friends here; in doing which he must have been exposed to much annoyance as people in England would as soon part with their lives as their money. Then Mr. Sandford Arnot whom he had employed as his Secretary importuned him for payment of large arrears which he called arrears in salary and threatened Rammohun if not paid, to do what he has done since his death, claim as his own writing, what Rammohun published in England. In short, Rammohun got amongst a low, needy, unprincipled set of people, and found out his mistake, I suspect, when too late, which preyed upon his spirit, and injured his health. With all his defects, he was no common man and his country may be proud of him.

It is quite clear that Wilson had remained aloof from Rammohun during the latter's stay in England. There is no evidence that he took any interest in Rammohun's mission in England or ever enquired into his pecuniary circumstances. Comfortably placed as he was as holder of a chair at Oxford, he did nothing to our knowledge to make things easier during the days of Rammohun's distress or to rescue him from the clutches of the greedy blackmailers whom he condemned so unequivocally only after the Indian savant's death. In short, he did not act the warm and faithful friend as did the Hares, the Carpenters and the Castles.

Nevertheless he could not withhold a tribute of admiration when his one time friend was gone : "With all his defects he was no common man and his country may be proud of him." We know what these "defects" were in Wilson's eyes. After his Dharma Sabha friends he had learnt to regard Rammohun Roy as an apostate, a 'renegade' from Hinduism. But the genius of the man and his distinct services to his country, it was impossible for even an alienated Wilson not to recognise.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy* (ed., K.D. Nag and D. Burman), Part II, (Calcutta, 1946), p. 80. Henceforth mentioned as *English Works*.
2. *English Works*, I, p. 12.
3. *English Works*, III, p. 4n.
4. *English Works*, II, p. 41n.
5. Garcin de Tassy apparently knew Rammohun for a long time and mentions having seen him at Paris and having received many letters from him in Hindusthani and English (. . . .*que J'ai en l'avantage de voir souvent pendant son sejour a Paris et dont J'ai recu plusieurs lettres en Hindoustani et en anglais—Histoire de la literature Hindouie et Hindoustani*, seconde edition, Paris, Tome II, p. 548). He has printed one of Rammohun's Urdu letters to him in his *Appendice aux Rudiments de la Langue Hindoustani* (Paris, 1833), p. 31, No. 14.
6. S.D. Collet, *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy*, (ed. D.K. Biswas and P.C. Ganguli, Calcutta, 1962), p. 527. Henceforth mentioned as *Collet*.
7. Cf. M. Lanjuinais, "Observations sur quelques ouvrages de Rammohun Roy"—*Journal Asiatique*, I Ser. Tome III (October, 1823), pp. 243-49; the July 1824 number of the *Journal* contains the following report : *M. Klaproth au nom d une commission, faith un rapport sur les titres lititeraries du Pandit Rammohun Roy, presente pour etre associe correspondent. Les conclusions de ce rapport sont soumises a la deliberation du conseil et le titre d associe correspondant est decerne a Rammohun Roy. Journal Asiatique*, I, Ser. Tome 5 (July 1824)), p. 62. For a detailed discussion of the subject see my Bengali article '*Rama-Mohana Raya O. Pharasi Vidvanmandali*', *Visavabharati Patrika*, Vol. XV, No. 1, pp. 62-4, which includes a complete Bengali translation of M. Lanjuinais' paper.
8. For the proceedings of the meeting, see *Asiatic Journal*, Vol. XI, New Series (May-August, 1835), pp. 222-25. The account contains (p. 224) a summary of the speech delivered by Rammohun on the occasion paying tribute to H.T. Colebrooke, the Director of the Society, for his distinguished command over the Sanskrit language as illustrated in the masterly translations of the *Dayabagha* and the *Mitakshara*. Rammohun also moved a resolution offering thanks on behalf of the Society to Colebrooke which was seconded by W.B. Bayley and unanimously carried.

9. It would however be difficult to agree witih Dr. David Kopf's assessment that with Wilson, "the older Orientalist pre-occupation with Vedic India came to an end and a new era of scholarly interest in 'medieval [*sic*] India began". (*British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, Calcutta, 1969, pp. 168-69). Such a schematic classification of Orientalist labours into mutually exclusive 'Vedic' and 'medieval' compartments is not warranted by facts and appears to be purely fanciful. In order to uphold his thesis Dr. Kopf has to omit all references to Wilson's English translation of the *Rig Veda Samhita* with the help of Sayana's commentary as well as the very serious efforts made by the Asiatic Society of Bengal to publish the *Vedas* under the editorship of Dr. Roer, in the forties of the last century. The attempt was stayed only when news came that the work of critically editing the *Vedas* had already been undertaken in Europe by scholars like Max Muller and others and that Wilson himself then in England, had exhorted the authorities of the Bengal Asiatic Society not to feel discouraged at this and to undertake the publication of Vedic texts other than the *Samhitas*, such as the *Satapatha Brahmana*. This suggestion was welcomed and subsequently acted upon. A mere glance at the list of the earlier publications in the *Bibliotheca Indica* Series is sufficient to convince anybody of this. The Society was not even prepared to waste its earliest labours in the field of Vedic studies and Roer's unfinished edition and translation of the *Rig Veda*. *Samhita* was published as early as 1848. This started the body off in its subsequently famous venture of academic publications. Roer's *Rig Veda* was followed by the successive appearances in print of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* Text and Eng. Translation (1849); the *Chhandogya Upanishad Text* (1849-50); the *Isa, Kena, Katha Prasna, Mundaka* and *Mandukya Upanishads* Texts (1849-50); the *Taittiriya, Aitareya* and *Svetasvatara Upanishads* Text (1849-50); the *Chhandogya Upanishad* Eng. trans. (1854); the *Taittiriya, Aitareya, Svetasvatara, Kena, Isa, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka,* and *Mandukya Upanishads* Eng. trans. (1851-55); the *Taittiriya Brahmana* Text (1855-90); *Taittiriya Samhita* of the Black *Yajurveda* Text (1854-99) the *Kaushitaki Brahman Upanishad* Text and Eng. trans. (1861); the *Maitrayaniya Upanishad* Text and trans. (1862-63); etc. Apart from thus inspiring his Calcutta compatriots Wilson had himself, in the meanwhile, adopted an even livelier programme of Vedic publications in England. He edited Stevenson's English translation of the *Sama Veda* (London, 1842) and followed it up by publishing the same author's text of the *Sama Veda* next year. Three successive volumes of his English translation of the *Rig Veda* were published from London in 1850, 1854 and 1857. The fact that he gave great impetus to the study of classical (not 'medieval'!) sanskrit by his researches, is undeniable. That does not however entitle us to segregate him from the field of Vedic studies where also he did important pioneer work himself besides encouraging others.
10. He acknowledge his debt handsomely cf. his *Dictionary Sanscrit and English* (Calcutta, 1819), Preface, pp. xv-xviii.
11. I have discussed the subject at some length in my paper '*Rama-Mohana*

Raya O Vedanta' in the *Visvabharati Patrika*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, pp. 137-78.

12. *Dictionary, Sanscrit and English* (Calcutta 1819), p. xvi.
13. *Ibid.*, p. xvii.
14. The letters were originally in possession of the late Mr. A.H. Wilson, the orientalist's grandson, who, I understand, bequeathed them along with other papers of his grandfather to the India Office Library. I came to know of their existence for the first time from a conversation with the late Tapan Mohan Chatterjee. I must here gratefully acknowledge the extreme courtsey of the authorities of the India Office Library, particularly that of Dr. R.J. Bingle, who sent me xerox-transcripts free of charge.
15. The Government Sanskrit College Library, Calcutta, is in possession of two copies of this extremely rare edition.
16. *Rama-Mohana-Granthavali* (Sahitya Parishad Ed.) Pt. 2, p. 55.
17. *Early History of Vaishnava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta, 1942), pp. 10-18.
18. Cf. Introduction to Baladeva's *Govinda-Bhasya* (Panini Office, Allahabad, 1912), pp. i-ii; and also the introduction to the same author's *Prameyaratnavali* (Printed as Appendix II to the former volume), pp. 3-4; for a discussion of the problem cf. De *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.
19. Government Sanskrit College Library Catalogue—'*Vedanta* 141'; the concluding line is : *Iti Sri-Paramahamsa-parivrajakacharya-Samkarena kritam Dvadasa Mahavakye Vivaranam sampurnam.*
20. H.T. Colebrooke, *Essays on the Religion and Philosophy of the Hindus* (New Edition, Indological Book House, Beneras, 1972), Chapter IX, 'Vedanta', p. 212.
21. For the full text of Wilson's letter cf. J.K. Majumdar, *Raja Rammohun Roy and Progressive Movements in India* (Calcutta, 1941), pp. 133-37; A modern apologist says : 'Wilson never defended *sati* but feared that all the educational progress achieved through the years with assistance of the Bengali elite would be undone by the new wave of Westernization amid cultural polarity" (David Copf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, p. 175, footnote 66). He however gives no evidence of any acquaintance with the full text of Wilson's letter on the subject and is completely silent on the point that Wilson did not favour the abolition of *Sati* as he considered it an age-old, and universal practice prevailing in India with Hindu scriptural sanction behind it. The orientalist no doubt regarded the practice as inhuman but the fact remains that he had thrown in his weight completely and openly against the anti-*sati* agitation waged by Rammohun Roy and his few friends.
22. Quoted by A.F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal, 1818-1835*, (Leiden, 1965), p. 123. The letter has been traced by Ahmed among the Bentinck Papers. I have lately acquired a transcript from the Portland Collection of Bentinck MSS through the courtesy of the Nottingham University Library.
23. Quoted in Collet, p. 281.
24. Peary Chand Mitra, *Life of Dewan Ramcomul Sen* (Calcutta, 1880), pp. 12-15.

17

INDIAN NATIONALISM : RAMMOHUN AND THE DEROZIANS

NIRMAL SINHA*

Some Historians think that the sense of nationalism in 19th century Bengal had its origin in the radical thought of the Derozians. This appears to be a distortion in itself. Nationalism in Bengal grew out of an increasing elitist consciousness of the continued deprivation of civil and political rights and of economic exploitation at the hands of the British. What fanned this feeling most among the educated Indians was their exclusion from all positions of trust and responsibility in the Company's administration. Though it deepened with time as a result of the spread of English education, it had no mass base for the better part of the 19th century, being confined originally to the elite of the metropolis, and developed within the framework of loyalty to the British Government.[1]

It found expression at the beginning in the ideas and activities of Rammohun and then mostly of his coadjutors, sometimes working on their own and sometimes in co-operation with the leaders of the orthodox group on such issues as, to name a few only, the Press Regulation of 1823, the Stamp Regulation of 1826, European monopoly of all situations of trust and responsibility in the administration and the judicature, the jury system, the Lakhiraj movement, the need to spread knowledge through the vernacular language. These ideas and activities slowly fostered national feeling among

*Barasat Govt. College, West Bengal.

the educated Indians within the limits of a very broad concept of freedom which can be spelt out as freedom from all manner of restraints, political, legal, administrative, social and economic. With time the contents of this broad concept of freedom would widen but only to the extent of enriching the political, economic, social and cultural thought of the Bengali intelligentsia and encouraging their greater participation both in public protestation against Government measures and regenerative activities, the most noticeable matrix of national feeling in 19th century Bengal.[2]

It was Rammohun who by his progressive ideas and activities helped the creation of this national feeling, though in a low key, in Bengal. He was the awakener of political consciousness among the educated Indian in the metropolis. His protests and remonstrances against Adam's Regulation III of 1823, which gagged the Press, made his educated countrymen aware of the importance of the liberty of the Press.[3] The agitation which led to the restoration of this liberty under Metcalfe's Act XI of 1835 forms an important landmark in the history of Indian political consciousness and national feeling.[4]

By his patriotic endeavour to obtain and enlarge civil and political rights for his countrymen, Rammohun made them aware of their deprivation of these rights without realizing which it would not have been possible for them to make any effectual dents in the British policy of exclusiveness based upon racial superiority and inequality in the eye of the law. By his protest against the Jury Regulation of 1827, he left enough inspiration both for his coadjutors and the orthodox leaders to persevere in agitational methods to achieve gradual relaxation of the restriction imposed upon Indian jurors. He was the first man to raise, while in England, his voice of protest against the rack-renting of ryots and to plead for reduced levy of rent. The resultant fall in revenue for Government, he pleaded, could be met by the appointment of educated Indians of respectable families as low-salaried Collectors in lieu of highly-paid Europeans. Appointment of Indians as assessors (Mufti) in the judicial department and to higher posts in the revenue department also came to be seriously advocated by him in England on the eve of the renewal of the Charter in 1833.[5] Government paid no heed to his plea for reducing the revenue, but, in consideration of many factors, appointed low-salaried Indians as Principal Sadar

Amins under Regulation V of 1831, as Deputy Collectors under Act IX of 1833 and as Deputy Magistrates under Act XV of 1843.

Rammohun's demand for admitting Indians to responsible posts in Government Services came to be partially conceded, and it gradually snowballed into a movement, supported by all sections of the elite in the metropolis, for achieving increasing association of Indians with all the Services, including the Covenanted Civil Service. In renascent Bengal this demand originating with Rammohun became a very important focal point of national feeling. It was echoed by Rasik Krishna Mallick, a Derozian, in his famous Town Hall speech of 5 January 1835;[6] in the pleading of Dwarkanath Tagore before the Bird Committee in 1839; in the stirring speech of Kashiprasad Ghosh delivered in Calcutta on 3 October 1841;[7] in the speeches of many liberal and orthodox leaders to whom it offered a common platform against Government's administrative policy.

A pragmatic political thinker influenced by Montesquieu and Bentham, Rammohun was the first man to advocate the separation of powers in India to safeguard liberty. Further, to prevent miscarriage of justice, he wanted not only special power for the Sadar Diwani Adalat to issue the writ of Habeas Corpus, but also the establishment of the Panchayat-jury system in the country.[8] That these demands, tinged with national feeling, shaped the democratic aspirations of his countrymen in future none can deny.

But this feeling, fostered by demands for rights and freedom from restraints and fortified by critical anti-Government speeches, writings and agitations, could not acquire that consuming passion for complete freedom either from foreign rule or from internal tyranny which characterized the national movements in the Spanish colonies and France, and which made a deep impression on the mind of Rammohun while in England. It should be remembered that the mental climate and other conditions obtaining in renascent Bengal, whatever be the extent of awakening or the intensity of patriotism among the city-based educated gentry, were simply unfavourable to the development of this kind of national spirit.

In the light of the above arguments, it will be a travesty of truth to trace the beginning of nationalism in 19th century Bengal to the radical thought of the Derozians. Derozio and the works of Western philosophers did encourage radical thought among them, but it was more in the direction of freeing their minds from

meanness, bigotry, idolatry, the fetters of social and religious tyranny and unreason in all forms than setting their hearts aflame with the fires of patriotism and nationalism againsttheir alien rulers.

Animated debates and discussions on social, political and religious problems at Derozio's Academic Association did feed their patriotism, but what, in practice, guided and shaped their patriotic endeavours to achieve social reform and civil and political rights was the spirit of Rammohun as embodied in his policies and activities to regenerate society within the bounds of loyalty to Government.

In the sphere of social reform, they followed in the footsteps of Rammohun and continued his work on a larger scale. In Rasik Krishna Mallick's withering criticism, in the *Gyananneshun*, of child marriage, polygamy, idolatry and Hindu superstitions, one could hear the echo of the critical voice of Rammohun. Though an ardent Derozian, Rasik Krishna publicly recognized, in April 1834, the importance of the work of Rammohun in the sphere of social reform. To promote social reform, he worked in collaboration with Peary Chand Mitra and Kissory Chand Mitra. Sib Chandra Deb, another Derozian, felt the same about Rammohun and ultimately joined the Brahmo Samaj in 1843. There were many others also, including Kashiprasad Ghosh who, in October 1841, publicly advocated widow marriage. The spirit of social reform that Young Bengal developed under the influence of Derozio would have been lost in the rising tide of immoderation had not there been the inspiring example of Rammohun to give it direction. This alone explains Young Bengal's acceptance of the leadership of Tarachand Chakrabarty, a coadjutor of Rammohun. And what attracted young firebrands to elderly liberals was their stand on 'Reason' at the altar of which both Rammohun and Derozio worshipped.

In the political sphere, Derozians alone cannot claim the credit of having introduced radical ideas in Bengal. Actually. some of these had come in the 1820s with Rammohun. More poured in, and they were reflected in the agitation, led by a combination of orthodox and liberal leaders, against the Stamp Regulation of 1826. Indian resentment against Government's "dangerous power of unlimited taxation" came to be expressed for the first time in different issues of the Government Gazette from April 1827 to September 1831. The levy of the stamp duty in Calcutta was criticized as 'a perfect anomaly in the principles of the British Government"—

as "a mode of taxation without the consent or knowledge of the subjects", which indirectly echoed the American cry of "no taxation without representation".[9]

Radical ideas came to be increasingly expressed in different papers from the beginning of the 1830s. Even Prasannacoomar Tagore, a faithful coadjutor of Rammohun, caused great alarm in European quarters by his editorial comment on a letter, exhorting Indians to learn the use of firerams, published in his *Reformer* on 12 October 1834. This was all branded as seditious.[10] But Prasannacoomar, despite his critical attitude to many aspects of the British administration, was always loyal to the Government.

Virtually, the same role was played by the Derozians, inspite of all their radical ideas, while trying through their criticism to make breaches in the walls of British exclusiveness in order to enlarge their countrymen's rights and responsibilities in administration. They collaborated with the elderly liberals and orthodox leaders in every agitation against Government, using means that characterized the endeavours of the elite in the 1820s, *viz.*, the Press, holding public meetings and submitting petitions to the authorities. What, however, gave better direction and greater political overtone to their joint endeavours was the establishment of societies, *viz.*, the Bangabhasa Prakasika Sabha (1836) which was merged in the Landholders' Society in 1838, the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge (1838) and the Bengal British India Society (1843),[11] the last two being dominated by Young Bengal under the leadership of Tarachand Chakrabarty.

Young Bengal's occasional outbursts of anger against the administration and the judicature could not make them rise above the inhibitions innate in the ethos of the metropolitan elite, nor lead them to break away either from Rammohun's line of moderation or from his objects. When Rasik Krishna Mallick, in his fiery speech of 5 January 1835, called upon Government to end European monopoly of the Covenanted Civil Service through Haileybury, he was voicing Rammohun's plea for the admission of educated Indian youths to the higher services. He broke no new ground when, on 8 June 1835, he upheld the necessity of restoring the liberty of the Press after condemning Adam's Regulation of 1823.[12] The role of Young Bengal in this agitation, led by Dwarkanath Tagore and his European friends, for the restoration of the liberty of the Press under Act XI of 1835 was a tribute to the spirit of Rammohun.

Still harsher became Young Bengal's tone of criticism, particularly after the arrival of Mr. George Thompson in Calcutta towards the end of 1842. This was reflected in the speech of Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, an ardent Derozian, at the Sanskrit College Hall on 6 February 1843[13]—a speech the contents of which were further stressed in an essay read by him at the Hindu College Hall on 8 Feburary.[14] Principal D.L. Richardson's objection to the speech led to an unseemly altercation with Tarachand Chakrabarty. The *Firend of India* described it as seditious and indirectly suggested the speaker's deportation to Amboyna.[15] But this "seditious froth" the Government ignored, because they had nothing to dread from the "disaffected harangues in the College Hall from men who had not the slightest influence in the country".[16] It was true, because the fiery harangue, conducive though it was to national feeling, concluded with the refrain that Indians should be allowed to share situations of trust and responsibility with Europeans and to have a hand in the removal of evils from the mofussil law-courts. This was also the "Alpha and Omega" of the pleadings of Rammohun Roy, who probably did not believe in Cobbet's observation that "a good patriot must begin with being a good hater".

Kashiprasad Ghosh, Young Bengal's colourful poet in the English language, in his speech at a meeting held on 3 October 1841 to establish a Society for the Amelioration of India which would work in co-operation with the British India Society of England (1839), complained not only of the loss of political liberty by the Indians even since the commencement of British supremacy in the country, but also of the enactment of laws by the Legislative Council "without taking their opinion as to the tendency of those laws". To the *Friend of India* all this appeared to be "talkee talkee, without any attempt at action".[17] If Kashiprasad and his politically-conscious friends meant business, they could have, on seeing the drafts of laws published simultaneously in the *Bengalee Government Gazette* in order to obtain the opinion of the governed, submitted to Government their suggestions and views promotive of genuine Indian interests. That this opportunity was not taken advantage of shows the ingrained disinclination of the Derozian patriots to translate their radical ideas into action in order to stir the alien rulers out of their apathy towards Indian views on matters of public weal and administration.[18] It is more interesting to note that as the address unwound itself, patriotic Kashiprasad lost his

radical stance and emerged in his true colours as a moderate while counselling his audience about their duties. The means be suggested to get their grievances removed was to petition Parliament and Government[19]—the proven constitutional means handed down by Rammohun. This suggestion was in agreement with the continuing elitist endeavour of promoting reform within the bounds of loyalty to Government.[20] To follow up radical thought with radical action was simply beyond the wildest dreams of the Derozians, derisively called 'the Chukerverty faction'. Even the mighty Ramgopal Ghosh, the stout-hearted Derozian called the 'Indian Demosthenes', could not leave the beaten track while he participated in the agitation against Government for rights relating to legal equality and admission of Indians to the Covenanted Civil Service.[21]

Far more interesting is the fact that even the most trenchant of critics among them secretly harboured in their hearts a preference for Government Service to continued exercises in withering criticism. For instance, Rasik Krishna Mallick was glad at the severance of his ties with the *Gyananneshun* on being appointed Deputy Collector in the Subordinate Executive Service in 1837. Quite a few others also, to whom Tom Paine's *Age of Reason* was their Bible, were equally glad to get similar situations in Government Service. The fulsome manner in which the leaders of the elitist group in Calcutta, all members of the British Indian Association, including Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, once a Derozian radical in thought, vied with one another in expressing their gratitude to the British Government for preventing the fires of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 from reaching Bengal and in pledging their allegiance to the British Crown revealed clearly the built-in psychological and other limitations on their sense of nationalism. For his services to Government and society, Dakshinaranjan was given the Talukdari of Sankarpur in Oudh after the Mutiny and the title of 'Raja' in 1871. Nevertheless, they shaped the matrix of national feeling in the country by their agitation against Government for more and more rights. They were patriots by the standards of the time, honest and ever eager to promote national feeling by their active participation in regenerative activities.

In the ultimate analysis, it cannot be denied that the spirit of Rammohun shaped the course of the renascence of Bengal for the better of the 19th century, inspite of the emergence of Young Bengal, whose language and effusions were Derozian, but whose

mode of action and aspirations were 'Roy-an'. There was, in fact, much in common between the spirit and teaching of Rammohun and Derozio :

> Consciously or unconsciously, Derozio became the continuer of the mission of Rammohun Roy. In their emphasis on rationalism and human freedom, in their condemnation of idolatry and in the close affinity that existed between the larger purposes of their Atmiya Sabha and Academic Association Rammohun Roy and Derozio seemed to have been impelled by the same dynamic spirit to attempt the regeneration of their country.[22]

Notes and References

1. *Freedom Movement in Bengal, 1811-1904* : *Who's Who* (ed. by Nirmal Sinha, Calcutta. 1968), Introduction, pp. xi-xvi.
2. *Ibid.*, Introduction.
3. *Ibid.*, the sketch of Rammohun Roy, p. 4.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 14, 41, 55, 76; *Calcutta Gazette*, of 3 Jan., 1835; David Hare (reprint, 1949), p. 75.
5. See, *Freedom Movement in Bengal*, 1818-1904, pp. 4-5.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 76; *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, 1835, *Asiatic News*, p. 43.
7. *Friend of India*, 14 Oct. 1841.
8. *Freedom Movement in Bengal, 1818-1904*, p. 5.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30; also, *Supplement to the Government Gazette* of 26 April 1827; *Government Gazette Extraordinary* of 27 April 1827; *Supplement to the Government Gazette* of 17 May 1827; *Government Gazette* of 28 May 1827; *Supplement to the Government Gazette* of 28 May 1827; *Government Gazette* of 8 Sept. 1831.
10. *Freedom Movement in Bengal, 1818-1904*, pp. 55-56.
11. See George Thompson's speech on the proposal for the formation of a Political Society at a weekly meeting on 6 April 1843 at 31 Fouzdaree Balakhana; his speech on the formation of Bengal British India Society on 20 April 1843 (*Speeches by Mr George Thompson, Father of Political Education in India*, ed. by Raj Jogeshur Mitter, Cal., 1895), see also the editorial in the *Friend of India*, 13 April 1843, p. 227.
12. *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, 1835, *Asiatic News*, pp. 170-71.
13. *Bengal Hurkaru*, 9 February 1843.
14. *Friend of India*, 16 February 1843.
15. *Ibid.*, 16 Feb. 1843.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*, 14 Oct. 1841.

18. *Ibid.* The same opinion was expressed by George Thompson at a meeting in Calcutta in 1843 while referring to Indian apathy to Government enactments, quoted by the *Friend of India*, 23 February 1843.
19. *Ibid.*, 14 Oct. 1841.
20. The spirit of loyalty to Government came to be stressed by the 4th Resolution on the proposed establishment of the Bengal British India Society on 6 April 1843. It states : "That the Society shall adopt and recommended such measures as are consistent with pure loyalty to the person and government of the reigning Sovereign of the British dominions, and due observance of the Laws and Regulations of this country; and shall discountenance every effort to subvert legal authority, and disturb the peace and well-being of society." This clearly reflects the real attitude of the fires eating Derozians towards Government. This affirmation of 'pure loyalty' to the British Crown was uncalled for. Indians were loyal. Thus, the *Friend of India* (13 April, 1843) banteringly observed : "There is no agitation but at the Fouzdaree Balakhana; and surely this is not of so serious a character as to render it necessary to come forward with an assurance of loyalty to the British Crown".
21. *Freedom Movement in Bengal, 1818-1904*, pp. 108-10.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

18

"A FORGOTTEN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY"

AMIYA SEN

During the early days of the East India Company the Judicial system prevalent in the country was in a state of transition. The Judiciary had no codes of law to follow in all cases. Nor was there any uniform procedure in its operations. Distinctions were also made between "His Majesty's subjects" and the so-called "natives" of India and even between "natives" professing different religions. One such distinction was fully exemplified in the system of trial by Juries in the courts established by the Company. By the Act of 1774, in such trials only Europeans could sit as jurors; none else, not even Indo-Britons as Anglo-Indians of those days were known, could claim to be re-presented even on the Petty Jury not to speak of the Grand Jury. With the spread of Western culture, however, natives and 'Indo-Britons' coming into more intimate contact with Europeans gradually grew conscious of their rights and privileges and could not tolerate without any protest such distinctions among the different sections of His Majesty's subjects in India. As early as 1816, the 'natives' sent to England a petition praying that they might be permitted to sit on juries. The authorities in England were in an awkward situation. They could not openly justify such distinctions; for even in England of those early days there were men liberal enough to undertake the defence and vindication of the cause of justice. In order, therefore, to avoid the difficulty "the authorities here", says Hume "on considering the petition, were of

opinion, that the Supreme Courts in the Presidencies already possessed the power of directing that natives should serve on Juries". They, thus sought to transfer all responsibility regarding such distinctions from themselves to their agents in India.

The 'natives' of Calcutta refused to be satisfied with such evasive replies. Taking advantage of the assurance of the authorities in England they presented, in 1817, "a memorial" to the Supreme Court in Calcutta in order to have the question settled. The Judge on that occasion declared that it was not in his power to direct 'natives' to sit on juries under the existing law and that Parliament alone could grant them that privilege. It did not require any super-subtle brain to understand the significance of this game of evasions and we find that for at least five years the 'natives' of Calcutta did not move any further with their agitation.

On the 8th January, 1822, the 'natives' again applied to the Supreme Court of Calcutta for permission to sit on juries. The result of this application was very significant of the evasive attitude of the authorities. The Chief Justice said that the Sheriff might summon them if he pleased. The Sheriff answered that he could not do so unless instructed by the Chief Judge and the Chief Justice declared that he had no power to give such instructions. At this distance of time and, in the absence of the original petitions, it is not possible to find out to what extent Rammohun was associated with this movement. But his attitude towards the Special Jury Act and the prominent part he played in the agitation for its repeal or rather for its amendment—make it very probable that he took a similar interest in this movement as well.[1]

The question of the improvement of the administration of justice in India had already attracted the notice of the authorities in England. In 1808, Sir Alexander Johnston, then Chief Justice of Ceylon, recorded it as his official opinion that "the most certain and effective method of improving the Government of India, of raising the moral and intellectual character of the natives and of insuring the continuance of their attachment to the British Empire, was to render the system of administering justice among them really independent, efficient and popular".[2] He was in favour of granting to the inhabitants of the country a direct and considerable share in the administration of justice and that under European judges. There was, however, considerable opposition among people both in India and in England. "The natives of India", in their

opinion, "from their division into Castes, from their want of intellect(?), from their want of education and from their want of veracity and integrity, were incapable of exercising any political or any judicial authority." He, therefore, thought it prudent that the experiment should first be tried in Ceylon. As the population of Ceylon was composed of a great number of "the four divisions of which the population of India was composed", if the experiment proved successful there, it might be acted upon "with great moral and political advantage in legislating for the natives of India". In 1825, at the request of the President of the Board of Council, Sir Alexander communicated to him "a statement explaining the reasons underlying the introduction of Trial by Jury in Ceylon and the consequences with which its adoption was attended."

The obvious way of remedying the defects of the administration of justice was "first to give natives a direct interest in that system by imparting to them a considerable share in its administration; secondly, to give them a proper value for a character for veracity by making such a character the condition upon which they were to look for respect from their countrymen and that from which were to hope for promotion in the service of their Government; thirdly, to make the natives themselves, who, from their knowledge of their contrymen, can decide at once the degree of credit which ought to be given to native testimony, judges of fact and thereby shorten the duration of trials". After mature consideration of the proposals in England, provisions were made extending the right of sitting upon juries, in criminal cases to every native of Ceylon.

The experiment proved very successful. As Sir Alexander observed in the statement—The (i) native jurymen being now judges of fact, and the European judges only judges of law, only one European Judge was necessary instead of two or three. Knowing full well the different degrees of weight which may safely be given to the testimony of their countrymen the native jurors decide (ii) upon questions of fact with great promptitude so that there is little delay in the administration of justice. They also obtain so much information regarding the (iii) modes of proceeding and the rules of evidence that the most efficient and respectible native magistrates may be, very well chosen from amongst them. After the adoption of these measures whenever a man was chosen as a juror the very fact of this choice was regarded as a proof of his being a man of unexceptionable character. This made the people more attentive

than they used to be in their adherence to truth and had given them a value for character. Being associated with the administration of justice they felt an interest which they never felt before in upholding the Government. They were also afforded an opportunity of hearing any observation which the judges might made to them regard to the administration of justice or the state of society or morals. The experiment of extending the rights and privileges of Englishmen to natives having after sixteen years of experience, been found to be productive of the greatest security to Government and of the greatest benefit to the people of the country it was felt that it might be applied to India as well.[3]

Meantime, the Indo-Britons in India were not idle. They were smarting under this stamp of inferiority. Early in 1825, they sent a petition to the Parliament for the removal of their disabilities. On June 13, 1825, in course of discussions in the House of Commons regarding the East India Judges Bill, Mr. Hume presented this petition and moved for an amendment empowering the Judges to direct Natives and others to act as Juries under such regulations as may be thought advisable for the due administration of justice. Mr. Wynn, the President of the Board of Control was very sympathetically disposed towards the proposal. He was perfectly sure that no invidious distinction should be made between different sections of His Majesty's subjects in India. Natives lawfully born in wedlock were entitled to be considered as British subjects and had the right to the privileges possessed by them. He considered all persons born in Calcutta to be British subjects and entitled to all privileges which appurtained to that character; nor could there be any reason why, if natives could serve on juries in England, they should not do so in India.[4] This assurance was sought to be translated into action by the East India Jury Bill. There was serious opposition to the Bill. Doubts were entertained by many who were consulated as to the expediency of allowing motives to sit on Grand Juries at all and on Petty Juries in cases where Europeans were concerned. Emphatic insistence "on the little respect paid by native to veracity or sanction of an oath" and the undesirability of placing the conquered in situations of judges of the conquerors in a recently acquired domain induced Mr. Wynn to introduce invidious distinctions in the Bill.[5] It gave all classes of natives the right to sit on the common jury, but, at the same time, enacted that the Grand Jury be composed of Christians alone. This distinction became still

more invidious and intolerable by the further stipulation that in cases where either of the parties was a Christian all the twelve persons shall be no other than Christians. When either of the parties was Hindu or Musulman, or any other class the Christians would have the privilege of judging them.[6]

The Act was received in India with a storm of protest and the most prominent voice that was heard against it was the voice of Rammohun. The exceptions made in the Act were felt by the natives of Bengal to be insulting and degrading, as country to the spirit of English Law and to the principles of abstract justice. Such was the information derived from personal communications on the subject with natives of first respectability and intelligence in Calcutta, which the editor of a contemporary journal gave to his readers in England. The most significant of this protest came from Rammohun's *Sambad Kaumudi.* The consequences of this new Act is that in matters where a man's life is at stake or where banishment, imprisonment and severe punishments are awarded, we, Hindoos and Musalmans, must submit to the verdict of Christians whether they be natives of Britain or the offspring of British fathers by Indian mothers, whether they be the common Portuguese or Armenians or the 'rice Christians' of Serampur. These persons shall have the privilege of judging in cases where our lives are concerned; whereas we, although living in the same country or in the same hamlet with them, and partaking in their virtues and vices shall have no power of judging respecting them. In like manner our descendants must also submit their lives to the decisions of the sons of Christians"[7]

In this unreasonable distinction between Christians and people of other faiths resident in India Rammohun suspected an insidious attempt on the part of the Government to favour the spread of Christianity in the country. As a matter of fact the proceedings of the debates at the East India House during this particular period show an anxiety on the part of several proprietors to assist in missionary efforts in India. Mr. Paynder's resolutions even against Suttee and the exaction of tributes from the pilgrims at Puri had, as their background, his orthodox faith in Christianity and his earnest desire for an extension of its sphere of influence; and there were not wanting proprietors who supported him in his evangelical zeal. It was not therefore, strange that Rammohun should take the East India Jury Act as a measure for the furtherance of Christianity.

"Missionaries and clergymen", proceeded Rammohun, "have spent more than thirty years in disseminating their faith in different sorts of books and by various other means, without being able to make a single true and sincere convert to Christianity; but now the way is opened and many persons, no longer able patiently to bear the reproach brought upon them by this Parliamentary Act, will take shelter under the Christian faith. When rulers of the country use force or art to win over their subjects to their own faith from that of their ancestors, who shall have the power to oppose ?"[8]

The alternatives suggested show the practical statesmanship of Rammohun and his sense of self-respect. "It would have been consonant to reason, virtue and equity, if it had been ordered by this Act that as a Christian shall have the privilege of being tried by a jury composed of Christians in like manner a Hindoo or Musulman shall be tried by a jury consisting exclusively of persons his faith, or that Christians shall have the privilege of sitting with Hindoo and Musulmans on the trial of a Hindoo or a Musulman, so Hindoo and Musulmans shall have the privilege, equally with Christians of setting on the trial of Christan." He could not observe with equanimity the slur cast upon "Hindoos and Musulmans" nor tolerate the stamp of inferiority that was sought to be put on them. The order of the Parliamentary Act, Rammohun was sorry to observe, had laid all Hindoos and Musulmans without any regard to rank or respectability prostrate at the fact of Christians, whether of this or any other place.[9]

Rammohun and his group could not remain inactive. They had already taken necessary steps in the matter. On this subject a memorial has been prepared now nearly a month past to the proper authorities in England by a person amongst us who is waiting in anxious expectation to hear the result—show the *Sambad Kaumudi* of Dec. 30, 1826. The fact that among his associates Rammohun took the most prominent part in controversies and in the drafting of petitions and memorials makes it most probable that the petition referred to was his own composition and that he modestly described himself in this connection as "one amongst us".

In 1828, again we find Rammohun taking a very prominent part in the agitation against the Special Jury Act. On August 18, 1828, he wrote to Mr. J. Crawford entrusting to him petitions numerously signed by Hindoo and Musalmans against the Jury Act which had come into operation in the beginning of 1827. The

arguments he used in support of his opposition to the Act mark him out as a champion of Indian rights and privileges. He very urgently protested against the introduction of "religious distinctions into the judicial system of this country" and pointed out that such acts were calculated not only to give "just grounds for dissatisfaction among the natives in general but also to excite much alarm among people conversant with political principles." He did not fail to lay special emphasis on the disastrous consequences of distinctions based on religious beliefs. Misery had resulted in Ireland from such distinctions; the same calamities might easily be reproduced in India by pursuing a similar policy. "Supposing that some hundred years hence the Native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirement of general and political knowledge as well as modern arts and sciences, is it possible," he asked, "that they will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectually any unjust and oppressive measures serving to degrade them in the scale of society ?" He reminded his contemporaries that it was easier to transport armed forces to Ireland and succeed in suppressing every effort of a refractory spirit. But the position of India is different. She might very well prove, "from her remote situation, her riches and vast population, either useful and profitable as a willing province, an ally of the British Empire or troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy" and her choice would depend on the administrative and other policy of Britishers. His almost prophetic vision could see future possibilities which were absolutely unapparent even to the statesmen and administrators of those early days. Nor was he less emphatic in his protest against the way in which the "Act was sought to be forced on India." "In common with those who seem partial to the British from the expectation of future benefits arising out of the connection. I necessarily feel extremely grieved in often witnessing acts and regulations passed by Government without, consulting or seeming to understand the feelings of its Indian subjects and without considering that these people have had for more than half a century the advantage of being ruled by and associated with an enlightened nation, advocaters of liberty and promoters of knowledge."[10]

The petition that was placed before the House of Commons on June 5, 1829 is an interesting document. Among the signatories we not only find the name of Rammohun but also those of some of his

most inimate associates as Gurudas Mukherjee, Dwarkanath Tagore, Prosanno Coomar Tagore and others. Its arguments bear a very close resemblance to the standpoint of Rammohun as expressed in his articles in the *Sambad Kaumudi* or even in his other writings on political and administrative matters. The petitioners respectfully but firmly protested against "the invidious distinctions introduced into the Act as not only useless but odious and impolitic." They pointed out that fifty years ago a committee of the House of Commons had recommended that Indians ought to enjoy to the fullest extent the right of sitting on juries without any reserve on the ground of religious opinions." With the spread of education among the native population of Calcutta they had become more familiar with English law : they had formed a connection much more intimate and numerous, with their European fellow-subjects. Not only so, they had been found qualified to act as jurors in many cases. Under these circumstances, the distinctions were wholly unnecessary.[12]

They pointed out that the better class of the natives of India were placed under the sway of the East India Company in a state of political degradation which was absolutely without a parallel in their former history, for, "even under their Mohammedan conquerous, such of your petitioners as are Hindus were not only capable of filling but actually did fill numerous employments of trust, dignity and emolument from which under the existing system of the Honourable Company's Government they are absolutely shut out . . They have submitted to these exclusions reconciled in some measure to them from a persuasion of the tolerant spirit of the local Government and from an implicit reliance on its often renewed assurances that their religious opinions should be inviolably protected."[13] In this assertion they seemed to be echoing similar sentiments expressed in the Appeal to the King in Council.

The emphasis the petitioners laid on disastrous consequences of invidious distinctions on grounds of religion remind us of Rammohun's letter to Crawford. They felt that privileges granted to one community and denied to another must be very injurious not only because it "exposes them without defence to the operations of prejudices arising from religious feelings among the strongest which actuate the human mind when once awakened but because the India-born Christians being much more numerous than Europeans and intercourse between them and Hindus and

Mohammedans being much more frequent and familiar, feelings of rivalry and animosity are much more likely to exist between them than between your Petitioners and Europeans. It was also degrading because those who were never regarded as superior were elevated above them by the sole circumstances of their religion." Now that they beheld themselves as branded with inferiority and "a numerous and increasing class of their own countrymen scarcely even on a level with themselves in public opinion withdrawn from the community to be enclosed within a circle of immunities into which they are debarred from penetrating, they feel themselves practically degraded with the same measure as their countrymen are exalted and experience the deepest humiliation." These distinctions were, consequently doubly injurious and degrading."[14]

They suggested that the Act might be intended to operate as a motive to conversion to Christianity and it "may be proposed to intimate to the people of India in this indirect manner that the road to European distinction can only be reached by a profession of the religion of the greater part of Europe."[15] They remained the House of Commons that the legislature of Great Britain and the local Government of the East India Company were bound by the most solemn and repeated pledges to protect the natives of India in the full enjoyment of their laws, customs and religion.[16] "Religious opinions," they pointed out, "exercise a great influence over their general conduct and daily conduct. It is not merely a system of theories and opinions but is interwoven with the laws, the manners, the daily necessities and daily actions of every condition of human life and any interference with it is, therefore, peculiary hard to be borne."[17] These pledges, they held, should be kept in that spirit of perfect and sacred good faith which "disdains alike insidious and indirect attack and open infraction" and if these assurances be withdrawn or if a system of indirect attack be commenced on all religions to which Christianity is opposed your petitioners will no longer know where to look for protection."[18] These passages bear a very close resemblance to the arguments developed in Rammohun's article in the *Sambad Kaumudi.*

It might have been hastly supposed, so the petitioners asserted, that there were no individuals professing the Hindoo and Mohammedan religions who moved in the rank of society from which the Grand Jury were selected.[19] They could not, however, believe that a social ban so absolutely revolting would ever have

been sanctioned by the legislature of a civilised nation. The Permanent Settlement was introduced to build up a landed aristocracy, that being one of the favourite objects of the British Government in Bengal. A new race of landed proprietors, "possessed of energy and capital," had, by that time, been created many of who resided in Calcutta. Similarly, the free-trade of the late years had created a class of native merchants, "in wealth equal and in intelligence but little inferior, to the most honourable of the European Commercial residents of Culcutta." To assert that there was in Calcutta among the landed proprietors and merchants "not one single individual entitled to rank in the eyes of Government as an equal with the European merchants of Calcutta or the Civil servants of the Government was an admission to the failure of the experiment which had been tried for over thirty years to create a race of native gentry for the prosperity of the country."[20]

It might also have been considered, so the petitioners pointed out, that the Grand Jury were called upon to judge of the value of evidence without the aid of the debates of the counsels and the directions of a judge, and such functions required an intellect of a higher order than that which was necessary for the due performance of those of a petty juror and more than was possessed by any Hindoo or Mohammedan. To meet this contention the petitioners observed that the petty jurors had to discern the truth among the conflicting statements of adverse witnesses and the eloquent and artful addresses of counsels against which the dry and impartial charge of a judge is but an imperfect protection.[21] It was a task far more difficult than deciding upon the value of *ex-parte* evidence and coming to a conclusion whether the guilt was sufficiently established by the complaints, proof, to warrant further judicial investigation. The knowledge that native inhabitants possessed of the peculiar habits, manners and prejudices of their own countrymen enabled them to judge more accurately the value of the evidence placed before them. It was further pointed out that for the functions of a petty juror in which judges and Barristers took part a more accurate knowledge of English was required than for the familiar examination of *ex-parte* evidence. "Justice," they held, "can never be perfectly administered without the aid of the people themselves."[22]

In their suggestions regarding the remedies of the disabilities introduced by the Act the petition showed interesting points of

resemblance with Rammohun's article in the *Sambad Kaumudi* : "If your Honourable House does indeed suppose it impossible that among men of different religions, a common sense of justice and common regard for impartiality should prevail, your petitioners trust that you will at least extend to them, in conformity with the sacred pledges given by the legislatures, the protection that is deemed necessary to afford to others." The petitioners, however, pointed out that such prejudices did not exist but that the invidious distinctions sanctioned by the legislature might create them.[23] They, however, preferred the second alternative that the legal distinctions between them and their fellow subjects should be removed either by permitting half the jurors from the community to which one of the parties belonged or by repealing the section altogether and leaving it entirely to the judges to form the list of jurors.[24]

The similarities of thought and style show clearly that either Rammohun was himself the writer of the petition or it was drafted in consultation with him—the style and sentiments expressed are, however, in favour of the first alternative being the more probable one. The petition was sought to be rediculed by the English Press. *The Asiatic Journal* tried to weaken its genuineness by the bare assertion, without any corroborative evidence whatsoever, that it was evidently the production of an English pen. *John Bull* went one step further and represented it to be a radical trick of interested parties. It opined, again without assigning any reason, that the native petitioners were mere tools. It stooped even to untrue statements and asserted that among the names published, there were few, if any, above the rank of moonshees or writers in public offices—and this of a petition signed by Dwarkanath Tagore, Prosanna Kumar Tagore, Rammohun Roy and others.[25]

The petition asserted that the Act had become very unpopular with the respectable natives of India and "if these disabilities were not removed in time no Hindu or Mohammedan inhabitant will willingly serve as a juror in any capacity."[26] Its prophecy was fulfilled by a curious occurrence during the same year. No Hindu and Mohammedans volunteered to sit on the petty jury much to the astonishment of the powers that be. This was probably the first occurrence of non-cooperation by the natives of India with the administration. *The Calcutta John Bull* wrote under date August 1, 1828—"It has been stated to us, in regard to no Hindoo or

Musalman having volunteered to sit on petty juries, to which they are eligible that this proceeds from the notion that a slight has been put on the whole of them by the more influential among them being excluded from the Grand Jury : and that if disqualifications were once removed, there are many who would come forward to offer their services on petty juries."[27]

It is, therefore, significant that the very person who was responsible for the East India Jury Act, should sponsor this petition before the House of Commons. He admitted that the concessions to the natives might be safely extended so far as the right of serving on the Grand Jury was concerned. The administration of justice, in his opinion, suffered from a deficiency in the number of judges. The only way in which this deficiency could be supplied was by raising and training up a "superior grade of native functionaries." "But the first step," so he asserted, "is to open the avenues of rank, distinction and emolument as the reward of good conduct." The situations of village and provincial magistrates then occupied by natives were limited in jurisdiction, nor was their salary adequate. Although education had progressed yet unless the natives could look forward to situations which would not only afford them emolument but rank and consideration in society, all other incentives to improvement must prove vain and insufficient. So all should "concur in the propriety of a declaration that the subjects of Great Britain without distinction of blood or colour be eligible to every employment for which their abilities, education and habits might qualify them."[28]

In supporting it Lord Ashley dwelt significantly on the advantages derived from associating Indians of intelligence and respectability with the administration of justice. Mr. Fergusson pointed out that its signatories were natives of Calcutta best known for their wealth, respectability and intelligence, "fully adequate to discharge judicial functions of the highest description." Sir Charles Forbes insisted upon the necessity of admitting the natives of India to a participation in all civil rights belonging to British subjects. In such a sympathetic atmosphere it was only natural that Mr. Wynn should close the debate by promising redress.[29] Later on, the House of Commons received in 1831, petitions from Bombay paying for the removal of the same disabilities.[30]

In the meantime, the Government of England had changed. Mr. C. Grant, when he came into office, was fully conscious of

the necessity of the changes advocated by the petitions. In the correspondence between him and the Court of Directors we find that it tried its utmost dissuade him but he remained firm.

The Court of Directors admitted that it had acted upon the principle laid down by Mr. Grant *viz.*, "that the natives of a country sufficiently civilised should be deemed eligible to fill important offices in the administration of its affairs." "The Principle once being accepted," observed Mr. Grant, "and the eligibility of natives to fill important and responsible posts being established, the propriety of excluding them by law from particular offices can only be maintained, by showing with respect to each office a special case of exception."[31]

Mr. Grant brushed aside the contention that "natives would be reluctant to acquire an acquaintance of English law and Acts of Parliament for the mere distinction of acting as unpaid magistrates or to take up the duties of this office on account of its responsibilities and their liability to penalties for illegal conduct," by observing that such men would not be selected and their exclusion would not be regarded as a grievance. There was, however, no reason why the acquirement of a knowledge of English law should be regarded by respectable natives as a matter of formidable difficulty. In private life and in the performance of public duties they had shown no deficiency either in "the habits of application to business or in the skill and acuteness required for its successful prosecution" nor were they "insensible to that stimulus to exertion which arise from the hope of honourable distinction."[32]

The Court urged that to commit to natives a direct cognisance of the acts of Europeans would have "An injurious effect in lowering that estimation of the European Character which was necessary for the stability of the Indian Empire." In reply, Mr. Grant pointed out that the 'natives' had long been accustomed to see Europeans in situations very unfavourable to the continuance of any such notion of their individual superiority, and the stability of the British Empire depended not on such notions of individual superiority but on a conviction of the superiority of the British Government to those of Asiatic states. "The real source of our strength, next to our military power and skill, being the unity of power and the justice of principle which have distinguished our Government, the security of our domain cannot fail to be increased

by every measure tending to remove needless distinctions and to combine all classes in the administration of laws."[33]

The Court considered 'natives' to be deficient in many qualities, particularly firmness of character so necessary to inspire confidence and so essential for the discharge of the duties of a Justice of the Peace. Mr. Grant pointed out in reply that the native character was not incapable of improvement in those points and it would seem that the most effectual means of that improvement would be to open the 'natives', as object of honourable ambition "those employments which obviously require the exercise of the qualities in question."[34]

The Court objected to the admission of non-Christians to Grand Juries and to Petty Juries constituted for the purpose of trying Christians. They pointed out that "according to the law of England, there should be some community of feeling between those who are to try and those who are to be tried; that men should be tried by their *Peers*, by what the English law with strong meaning, calls *the country*; and further that in the trial of an Englishman or a Christian by Hindus or Musalmans there is no country, no community of feeling, interests or habitude." In reply to this objection Mr. Grant observed that the constitution of England would recognise as *Peers* or *Country*, in matters of this nature, "those persons, in every part of our domain, who are made amenable to the same tribunal as their European fellow-subjects. It does not appear that identity of religion has been considered as necessarily involved in those expressions." "Such arguments," in his opinion, "involve the principle of separation between persons of different religions which is obviously full of injustice and attended with injurious and fatal consequences both to the Governors and the governed."[35]

Similar arguments, we find in Rammohun's remark in answer to the objections raised by the Court of Directors against the introduction of the proposed Jury Bill. I am quite at a loss, observed Rammohan, "to conceive why the Court of Directors instead of endeavouring to conciliate the affections of millions of British subjects in India should, on the contrary, pass laws calculated to stir up a spirit of religious intolerance in a harmonious though mixed community and to revolt the feeling of the most numerous classes of it, particularly, the intelligent among the rising generation."[36] He further pointed out—"It lies with every

government to establish and preserve a community of feeling, interest and habitude among various classes of its subjects, by treating them all as one great family, without showing an invidious preference to any particular tribe or sect, but giving fair and equal encouragement to the worthy and intelligent under whatever denomination they may be found. But by pursuing a contrary plan, for 'community of feeling' will of course be substituted religious jealousy for community of interest, a spirit of domination or ascendency on the one hand, of hatred and revenge on the other, and lastly for community of habitude will be established a broad line of demarcation and separation even in conducting public business."[37] How prophetic!

All the Directors (except Major Carval and Mr. John Forbes) concurred in opposing Mr. Grant and, not content with this, they stirred up the Editor of the *Morning Chronicle* to attack the Bill and the author of it in his journals in order to prejudice the British Public against it. This having failed, they got a number of their servants and connections to draw up a petition against it to be presented to the House of Lords. Such a petition signed by 34 servants of the East India Company was presented before the House of Lords. Inspite of all this strong opposition the Bill was duly read a third time and passed by the House of Commons on June 12, 1832.[38]

The India Justices and Juries Bill was vehemently opposed by the Anglo-Indian Press and it is a significant fact that Rammohun came in for his due share of blame. One editor found in it a principle subversive of European ascendency in this country. Mr. Grant was, in his opinion, an inexperienced legislator and a mere political visionary and, as such, he must have been "mystified by Rammohun Roy." For the Jury system was incompatible with the state of society in India. "Indians must give up many of their characteristics like subservience, slavish instinct, before they can be entrusted with the duties of a juror." He then lashed himself up into fury and concluded in a style reminiscent of the days of the Ilbert Bill controversy. "That we shall," observed the irate editor, "in process of time, be ejected from this country there is little doubt. Let us not be prematurely busy in teaching its inhabitants to lord it over us. No measure is, we conceive, more calculated to hurry the catastrophe than the favourite idea acted on by Mr. Grant, the superiority, namely, of theory *vs.* practice, self-

sufficiency *vs.* experience." Again : "It is not often that we have occasion to speak favourably of the politicul measures of the Court of Directors or to use harsh language towards the enlightened Ex-Brahmin Rammohun Roy; in the present instance, however, we have good reason to break our rule in either case . . . . nor can anything be more impolitic than the *arguments evidently supplied by the Hindu patriot* who has sacrificed truth and honesty in order to pander to his passion for theory and assured Mr. Grant that all-India regretted the non-appearance of native Grand Jurors while he must have known that such a statement was hardly true when predicted of even the enlightened population of the single city of Calcutta." The fulminations of the Anglo-Indian Editor throw a flood of light on the influence of Rammohun over the mind of Mr. Grant and the decisive part he played in the removal of these grievances.[39]

Even when the Act was passed in 1832, it received a very mixed reception in India (?). While Justice Sir E. Ryan of the Calcutta Supreme Court welcomed it and rejoiced that invidious distinctions had been removed, Chief Justice Sir W. Compton of the Bombay Supreme Court in course of sincerely congratulating the native population for the measure candidly confessed that his experience in India had led him to entertain some doubt whether the natives of these presidencies were yet sufficiently qualified; and Justice Sir Ralph Palmer of the Madras Supreme Court openly showed his dissatisfaction with the measure.[40]

Rammohun was a practical politician. He did not speculate on the origins of law and constitutions or even on the general principles of political theory for the sake of speculation; nor did he attempt to draw conclusions deductively from general principles and apply them towards the solution of practical problems. On the contrary, he always took up issues of practical importance, analysed them and out of such analysis arrived at general principles which illuminated the practical problems. It is this "wide illumination from great principles of human experience" that makes whatever he wrote, petitions or pamphlets, so very significant.

An analysis of the controversy that centred round the East India Jury Bill shows that although Rammohun's primary concern was the removal of invidious distinctions, he suported his point of view by reference to general principles which touch the fundamentals of politics and administration.

During the age in which Rammohun lived the ultimate power of legislation was vested in the British Parliament. Legislating from a distance of thousands of miles, it was very probable that the Parliament, for want of knowledge should arrive at wrong decisions with regard to the point at issue. There was the further problem of how to make public opinion effective in matters of legislation. Rammohun laid special emphasis on this aspect of the question. According to him legislation should be undertaken in Parliament "upon representation being made by local authorities" and completed "after due investigation" and with the advice of the High Council of the realm." By investigation he meant "circulation for public opinion"—a procedure he recommended in his Questions and Answers on the Judicial system of India. It is not necessary to go into the details of the recommendations. Rammohun, however, laid special emphasis on the part which ought to be played by public opinion in matters of legislation. It was, therefore, only natural that he should lament, as he did in his letter to Crawford, for the callous indifference shown to public opinion in the acceptance and the implementation of the Special Jury Act.

Rammohun was conscious of the loss of political consequence of Indians under the British rule : notwithstanding this loss of power and prestige, Indians had reconciled themselves to it from a persuasion of the tolerant spilit of the local Government and an implicit reliance on its assurances. It was this implicit reliance, this implicit faith in its *bona fides* that was according to him, the foundation of the stable structure of the British Government in India. Once this faith received a shock from the measures of the Government the cement of mutual trust which bound together the Governor and the governed would be destroyed with disastrous results. Rammohun accepted Bentham's theory of the duty "of resisting the Government in case the benefit to be secured by it is greater than the evils of revolution." "If mankind" so he asserted "are brought into existence and by nature found to enjoy the comforts of society and the pleasure of an improved mind they may be justified in opposing any system, social, domestic or political, which is inimical to the happiness of society or calculated to debase the human intellect"[41] This gives an added significance to the warning he conveyed through Crawford to his contemporaries. India might according to him, become a faithful ally of the

British Empire, or its bitter enemy according to the policy followed by the Government.

Religion, with Rammohun, was not a mere system of theory and opinion but a way of life. It is interwoven with the laws, manners, daily necessities and daily actions of men. Any interference with it is particularly hard to be borne. Whenever, there is the suspiction of an attack, however, insidious and indirect it be, in contravention of repeated assurances by the Government, he felt it a duty to express his grief, his astonishment and his alarm.

Rammohun was conscious of the deficiencies of the Judicial system under the East India Company. He was strongly in favour of closer association of the people with the administration of justice. The judges, in his opinion, owing to the absence of a common language and the differences in manners, etc., could not acquire an adequate knowledge of the real nature of the grievances of the persons seeking redress or of the real character and validity of the evidence by which their claims were supported or opposed, Indians with their knowledge of the peculiar habits, manners and prejudices of their own countrymen should be given a direct and considerable share in the administration of Justice. "Justice can never be perfectly administered without the aid of the people themselves."

In the days of Rammohun there were amity among the different communities of India. Time and again he reminded the authorities both in England and in India, that communal prejudices were non-existent in India and they were living in a 'harmonious though mixed community." He could not understand why the Court of Directors should pass laws calculated to stir up a spirit of religious intolerance. He could not but perceive the dangerous situation that the invidious distinctions sanctioned by the legislature might create. He spoke of the operation of the prejudices arising from religious feelings "as the strongest which actuate the human mind if once awakened" and warned the authorities concerned that by pursuing their policy of introducing invidious distinctions based on religion they would be disintegrating this harmonious though mixed community. It was this fear which urged him to take so prominent a part in the agitation against the Special Jury Act.

We have before us two peoblems of supreme importance. The problem of the treatement of minorities and the problem of emotional integration. The ideal that we have put before us is that of

a secular state – a state which would treat all communities alike and mete out to them justice without reference to creed or colour. Was not Rammohun anticipating such a concept when he spoke of "equal treatment without showing invidious preference to any particular tribe or sect" and "of giving fair and equal encouragement to the worthy and intelligent under whatever denomination they may be found ?" We speak of emotional integration, mutual forbearance, a recognition of a common basis of culture and ideals. Did not Rammohun express, in his own way, the same ideals when he asserted. "It lies with every government to establish and preserve, a *community of feeling*, interest and habitude among the different communities resident in India ?" What ideal of national integration can be higher than the concept of a "family of communities ?" Have the disastrous results of an absence of integration ever been more eloquently expressed than by Rammohun ? Rammohun pointed out that "by pursuing a contrary policy for community of feeling" will be substituted "religious jealousy" for "community of interest" a "spirit of domination or ascendency" on the one hand, "of hatred and revenge" on the other—Does not this assertion give a vivid picture of the disastrous consequence of invidious preferences leading to national disintegration ?

The fight that Rammohun put up for the national self-respect of Indians as Indians and against the intrusion of distinctions based upon religious belief in the realm of the administration of justice in India was thus a strenuous one. He had to contend against heavy odds, the prejudices of Anglo-India, the cautious policy of the Court of Directors and the inertia of his own people. And, it was a fight of great significance for in it was involved high moral, political and administrative principles. Not only so, it went directly against the superiority complex then running rampant among authorities both in India and in England. Even Mr. Wynn fell a victim to the vociferous opposition of people whom he consulted. The liberal minded Mr. Grant had to face not only the opposition of the Court of Directors but also a public campaign based upon the idea "that the Bill was an attempt to alter by force of law that relation between the European and the Asiatic which had conferred on a few strangers the Empire of India," It was against such ideas that Rammohun had to fight. He had to convince the right-thinking people of England of the justice of his cause. He had to mystify Mr. Grant into accepting more liberal principles. Although the

change of government in England facilitated the passing of the East India Jury Act, Rammohun's vigilance, his industry in this cause and the decisive part he played in its successful issue should be gratefully remembered.

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31\. Letter from the Right Hon'ble Charles Grant, Chairman, Board of Control to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, East India Company, March 6, 1832, *Rammohun and Progresive Movements in India,* p. 381.

32\. *Ibid.,* p. 382, (Parliamentary Papers, 1831-32, Vol. 31) Cf. "Persons who choose to qualify themselves by acquiring a competent knowledge of

British law may be appointed by Government. Those who might decline the labour and the rise would, of course, be not appointed. It imposes no hardship of difficulty on either party"—(Rammohun : Answer to objections by the Court of Directors).

33. *Ibid.*, p. 383. Cf. "The Court must know that such" direct cognisance "has already existed for years. Has this coercion at the very seat of the British Empire lowered the estimation of the British charactcr or impaired the British Power in India ?" (Rammohun : *Ibid*).
34. *Ibid.*, p. 383. Cf. "And if they saw by experience that their merits were appreciated, that they might hope to gain an indepe\u0131.dence by honest means . . . . being ultimately rewarded by situations of trust and responsibility they would gradually being to feed a high regard for character, rectitude of conduct, and from cherishing such feelings become more and more worthy of public confidence. (Rammohun: Paper on the Revenue System of India, published 1831).
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19

19

RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY'S TRACTS ON SATI : 1818-1831

I

RAMA PRASAD CHAWLA

Warren Hastings, after assuming the duties of the Governor-General of Bengal, employed Pandits to compile a digest of Hindu law. This digest named *Vivadarnavasetu*, 'the bridge over the sen of disputes,' was first translated into Persian, and from Persian into English by Nathaniel Brassey Halhead, and printed and published in London (1776) under the name, *A Code of Gentoo Laws or Ordinations of the Pandits*. In the concluding paragraph of Chapter XX of this work it is stated (p. 286) :

> "It is proper for a Woman, after her Husband's death, to burn herself in the Fire with his Crops; every Woman, who thus burns herself, shall remain in Paradise with her Husband Three Core and fifty Lacks of years, by Destiny; if she cannot burn, she must, in that case, preserve an inviolable Chastity; if she remains always chaste, she goes to Paradise; and if she does not preserve her chastity she goes to Hell."

These provisions of the officially published digest of Hindu Law convinced the British authorities that Sati was "authorized by the tenets of the religion of the Hindus." At the suggestion of Sir William Jones the government of Lord Cornwallis employed the

famous Pandit Jagannatha Tarkapanchanana of Triveni to compile a more extensive digest, Jagannatha's digest entitled *Vivadabhangarnava* was translated into English by H.T. Colebroke and published in four volumes. This English translation is widely known as Colebrooke's Digest, Book iv; Chap. 3, Sec. 1 of this Digest (Vol. ii, pp. 567-74) deals with the self-immolation of the widow wherein original texts prescribing *anumarana, anvarohana,* or *anugamana,* 'following the husband to death or to his funeral pile,' are quoted and explained. These texts are borrowed, either directly or indirectly, from two older digests, Vijnanesvara's commentary on the *Yajnavalkyasmriti* called the *Mitakshara* (about 1100 A.D.) and Smarta Raghunandana Bhattacharya's *Suddhitatva.* The *Mitakshara* is the earliest extant and most authoritative digest of Hindu Law and usage and Raghunandana's work hold undisputed sway in Bengal. Raja Rammohun Roy approached the question of Sati, not as a social reformer in the ordinary sense of the term, but as a *Smarta* or orthodox student of Smriti, or the codes of Hindu law attributed to the ancient Rishis. In this note I propose to make an attempt to determine the place of Raja Rammohun Roy among the Smartas.

The inclusion of so determined an opponent of the Sati rite as Raja Rammohun Roy among the Smartas may sound paradoxical to many. But there have been, not only in the proto-historic period when the Rishis lived, but even in the late historic period, learned Brahmans and Smartas who opposed the cruel rite with as much zeal as Raja Rammohun Roy. One such learned Brahman is Bana, the author of two Sanskrit prose works, *Harsacarita* and *Kadambari,* who lived in the first half of the seventh century A.D. and was attached to the court of the Emperor Harsa. In the *Harsacarita,* Chapter v, Bana writes that when king Prabhakaravardhana of Sthanisvara (Thanesvara), father of Harsa, was on the point of death, Harsha's mother, queen Yasovati, burnt herself to death on the river Sarasvati. It was not a case of *anumarana,* but one of ordinary suicide and in his account of the cremation of the body of the deceased king, Bana does not state whether any other wife of his mounted the funeral pyre of her lord. In his *Kadambari* Bana condemns *anumarana* in unmeasured terms. In this prose romance he hero, Chandrapida, exclaims irrelevantly :

"This practice called *anumarna* is absolutely fruitless. This

practice of putting an end to one's own life on the death of the father, brother, friend or husband is followed by the uneducated, it is due to delusion of mind, ignorance, hot-headedness, short-sightedness, gross headlessness; it is a digression from the path of duty on account of foolishness. Life should not be put an end to till it leaves of itself . . . .It does no good to the deceased. It cannot bring the deceased back to life; it is not the way to increase religious merit; it is not the way to gain the world of bliss; it cannot prevent one from falling into hell; it cannot enable one to see the deceased; it cannot enable one to meet the deceased. The finite soul, lacking freedom, is carried to another world as a result of *karman*, and there the sin of committing suicide is attached to it. If the person lives, she can do immense good to the deceased and to herself by offering water and other funeral oblations; but if she dies, she can do no good either to the deceased or to herself."

Bana was not a professional *smarta* or student of Hindu law but he was a learned Brahman. His declaration that *anumarana* was fruitless, may sinful, leads one to think that he did not take the texts prescribing *sati* ascribed to ancient Risis like Angiras, Vyasa and Harita seriously.

These texts declaring also the rewards of the rite could not have been unknown to Bana, for he makes queen Yasovati say in the *Harsacarita* just before her self-immolation :

"Going before, like the dust of your father's feet to announce his coming to the heavens, I shall be highly esteemed of the hereloving spouses of the goods."

Medhatithi, the author of the earliest extant and most elaborate and authoritative commentary on the Code of Manu, assumes a similar attitude and opposes *anumarana*. Manu provides (v. 157) :

"At her pleasure let her emaciate her body by (living on) pure flowers, roots, and fruit; but she must never even mention the name of another after her husband has died."

Commenting on this stanza Medhatithi writes :

"This is expained in detail.

"As for Manu self-murder is forbidden for woman also.

(Opponent) "The injunction of Angiras that '(wife) should follow her husband to death' must also be always carried out. The fruit of this rite is also extolled.

(Reply) "In connection with the desire for reward, *anumarana* stands on the same footing as the *Syena* sacrifice. If, following the injunction, 'creature should be destroyed by the performances of the *Syena* sacrifice', and blinded by very deep hatred, any one undertakes the performance of the rite, it does not thereby become a meritorious action. Similarly, if, inspite of the prohibition (of Manu), any one, desiring the rich reward, infringes that prohibition and immolates herself, such self-immolation cannot be recognised as an act really in accordance with scripture. Therefore, there is prohibition of self-immolation of the woman on the death of her husband.

"Moreover, this injunction (of the smriti of Angiras) is opposed to the direct Vedic injunction, 'one should not put an end to oneself before the expiry of the allotted term of life (for gaining heaven)', and, therefore, this injunction of the smriti should be understood in a different sense."

Yajnavalkya ordains (I. 86) :

> "The woman who has last her husband should not be without (the protection of) father, mother, son, brother, mother-in-law, father-in-law or maternal uncle; otherwise she is blame worthy."

Commenting on this Vijyanesvara write in the *Mitakshara*, "This (stanza) supports the practice of asceticism. Vishnu enjoins, "After the death of (her) husband, practice of asceticism, or ascending the pile after him (*anvarohana*).' Great reward follows from ascending the pile after him." Vijnanesvara goes on to quote stanzas attributed to Vyasa, Angiras, Sankha and Harita that directly enjoin and extol the reward of the self-immolation of the widow. Medhatithi, who probably wrote at least a couple of centuries before Vijnanesvara, was too great an authority to be ignored. Vijnanesvara quotes him saying, *kaisciduktam* "it is said by some' and writes a rejoinder. He says in reply to Medhatithi that there can be no analogy between the *syenayaga* and the self-immolation

of the widow. About the vedic prohibition of suicide Vijnanesvara says :

> "One who desires *moksha* (final salvation) should not put an end to herself before the expiry of the allotted term of life because, if one dies, it is not possible for her to gain salvation or enjoyment of the great happiness of union with Brahman obtainable by the knowledge of Self-possessed by one the blemishes of whose mind have been removed by the performance of daily duties and occasional ceremonies and who studies and practises meditation. Therefore, life should not be cut short for enjoying the transitory and inferior happiness in heaven. But she who does not desire *moksha*, but only desires the transitory and inferior happiness in heaven, should perform self-immolation like other rites performed with a view to gain reward, and thereby she is not blameworthy."

Later compilers followed Vijnanesvara and *anumarana* came to be recognized as *dharma*. Raja Rammohun Roy in his tracts on Sati undertook the great task of refuting Vijnanesvara in accordance with the method followed by the orthodox Smartas. His task would have been easier if he had before him the great commentary of Medhatithi on *Manusmriti*. But, as his writings show, he knew only Kulluka Bhatta's brief commentary on Manu, and no other. But inspite of this and other disadvantages the acumen with which Raja Rammohun Roy carried out this work entitles him to be regarded as one of our greatest Smartas.

In his Tract No. 1, Raja Rammohun Roy begins by making the advocate of *Sati* reproduce all the texts quoted by Vijnanesvara and Raghunandana in support of the rite. In his reply as the opponent, like Medhatithi, he takes his stand on the stanza of Manu quoted above as directly forbidding *anumarana*. Raja Rammohun Roy does not go so for as Medhatithi and say that *anumarana* enjoined by Angiras is a sinful rite like the *syenayaga* enjoined by the Veda, but, citing the well-known stanza of Vrihaspati, says that an injunction of any other smriti that is opposed to Manu is not commendable. The bulk of Rammohun Roy's tracts 1 and 2 is devoted to repplying to Vijnanesvara's absurd statement that a widow who is not desirous of final beatitude (*moksha*) but only desires heavenly bliss for a limited period of

time, is authorised to follow her husband to death. He attaches as much importance to the Vedic text which prohibits suicide as does Medhatithi, and, quoting passages from the *Bhagavadgita*, the *Upanishads* and other texts shows that final beatitude (*moksha*) and not heavenly bliss for a limited period, promised by the advocates of *Sati*, is the goal of human life.

Rammohun Roy's opinion about the well-known stanza from the Rigveda (X. 18.7) cited by the advocates of *Sati* in support of the rite shows his critical acumen. Raghunandana provides that this stanza should be recited by the priest when the widow enters into the fire of the funeral pyre of her husband. The stanza as read by him, runs :

इमा नारीरविधवा सुपत्नीराञ्जनेन सर्पिषा संविशन्तु ।
अनश्रवा अनमीवा सुरत्ना आरोहन्तु जलयोनिमग्रे ॥

Rammohun Roy's English translation of this stanza in its present form will be found in tract No. 1 (p. 10) and again in tract No. 3 (p. 61). A comparison of Raghunandana's reading of the stanza with the reading in the original (Rigveda) as interpreted by Sayana shows that in place of—

आरोहन्तु जनयो योनिमग्रे

(Let the wives first enter the house,)
of the original Raghunandana reads—

आरोहन्तु जलयोनिमग्रे

(O Agni ! let her enter into fire.)

This stanza recurs in two of the hymns of the *Atharvaveda* (xii, 10, i; xviii, 18, 7) and in the *Taittiriya-Aranyaka* (vi, 10, 8). For *samvisamtu* (let them enter) in the first line of the stanza in the Rigveda, the Atharvan has *samsprisantam* (let it he applied) and the *Taittiriya-Aranyaka*, *samsmrisantam*, meaning the same thing. But in all these recensions the reading of the last part of the second line is identical, आरोहन्तु जनयो योनिमग्रे Raghunandana cannot be held responsible for the alteration of the reading. A Rigvedic stanza authorising Sati isfirst referred to in a passage of the *Brahma-Purana* quoted by Raghunandana and others. This Puranic text is not quoted by Vijnanesvara in the *Mitakshara*, but by Aparaditya, the author of an elaborate commentary on the *Yajnavalkyasmriti* called *Apararka*

compiled in the second half of the twelfth century. Aparaditya writes that the Rigvedic stanza referred to in the Purana is the one begining with *ima nariravidhava.* Aparaditya could not have referred to the stanza thus unless *janayo yonimagre* had already been altered to *jalayonim agne*. So the alteration of the reading of the stanza must have been affected by the advocates of *anumarana* before Aparaditya, probably even before Vijnanesvara, though the latter does not refer to it. Raja Rammohun Roy did not possess the modern facilities for finding out the correct reading of the Vedic *mantras*. Yet with remarkable intuition he questions the genuineness of the reading of Raghunandan in tract No. 3. (p. 61).

Another instance of Raja Rammohun Roy's critical power is the detection of a spurious text of Manu. One of his opponents produced this stanza of Manu quoted by Kamalakarabhatta in the *Nirnayasindhu* :

तथा च मनु : ब्रह्मचर्यं चरेद्वापि प्रविशेद्वा हुताशनं ।

"Manu also says, (A widow) should perform asceticism or burn herself."

In his Bengali tract No, 3 (not translated and incorporated in English tract No. 3) Rammohun Roy writes on this stanza :

> "The *Nirnayasindhu* may be a modern or an old book. In the first place, if it is a modern book, it is without authority. Perhaps some person, intending to bring about him the death of women, has published this book containing spurious texts. Secondly, if the book had been an old one, and if it had originally included this passage attributed to Manu, the author of the *Mitakshara* would certainly have supported *Sahamarana* (widow's dying with her husband) with this stanza of Manu quoted in the *Nirnyasindhu* in the Section on *Sahamarana*; Kullukabhatta in his commentary on Manu would certainly have explained this stanza in the section on the duties of the widow. Smarta Bhattacharya (Raghunandana) in his book refers to an old *Nirnyasindhu*, but never refers to this stanza in the section on *Sahamarana*. Therefore, it is evident that a modern writer intending to kill women has interpolated the passage in the old *Nirnayasindhu.*"

Raja Rammohun Roy's conclusion that Kamalakara's *Nirnaya-*

sindhu is a modern, that is to say post-Raghunandana, compilation is absolutely correct. In the printed text of Kamalakara's *Nirnaya-sindhu* we find copious references to Raghunandana's work collectively named *Gaudanibandha*, the Bengal Digest.

Besides great learning and critical acumen, Raja Rammohun Roy's tracts on Sati disclose his admirable mental balance and restraint. The concluding portion of his tract No. 2 and other passages show how keen was his feeling for the unfortunate widows. He was not also indifferent to what foreigners thought of the Hindus on account of the prevalence of such cruel rites. In the concluding paragraph of truct No. 3 published in 1830, after the prohibition of the rite by the government of Lord William Bentinck, Raja Rammohun Roy thanks Heaven for rescuing "our weaker sex from cruel murder, under the cloak of religion; and our character, as a people, from the contempt and pity with which it has been regarded, on account of this custom, by all civilized nations on the surface of the globe," (p. 66). But in his tracts he approaches the question of *Sati*, not with his eyes fixed on "civilized nations on the surface of the globe" outside India, but as we have already seen, as an orthodox student of the Brahmanic smriti. In the concluding paragraphs of his recently discovered fourth tract published in England Raja Rammohun Roy takes his stand on the code of Manu (pp. 75-76) and not on humanitarian or other considerations. Modern Hindu social reformers cannot be expected to possess the Raja's faith in the sacred books of the Brahmans. Still the method followed by him in dealing with Sati is the proper method for dealing with the Hindu social abuses because it does not differ materially from the historical method. In the injunctions from different sources discussed above two courses only are provided for the widow : ascetic life or *anumarana*. But in the earlier codes a quite different course is prescribed. It is called *niyoga*, appointment, analogous to the Jewish Levirate, a custom by which a dead main's brother or next of skin or even a member of the same caste could raise issue on his widow. The funeral hymns of the Rigveda and the Atharvaveda are reminiscent of a primitive practice of the self-immolation of the widow on her husband's funeral pyre. But this practice was then performed only symbolically. The widow was first made to lie down by her head husband on the funeral pyre. She was then made to rise and return home with the recitation of

the following stanza which occurs both in the Regveda (X. 18.8) and the Atharvaveda (XVIII. 3.1) :

> "God up, O woman, to the world of the living; thou liest by this one who is deceased; come to him who grasps thy hand, thy second spouse thou hast now enered into the relation of wife to husband."

Commenting on this stanza Saunaka writes in the *Brihaddevata* (vii, 13-15):

> "With this (stanza) 'Rise up, O woman' the wife ascends (the funeral pyre) after her dead (husband). The younger brother of the departed, repeating (the stanza), prohibits (her). The Hotri ought to perform this rite, should there be no brother-in-law, because a Brahmana enjoins that (the widow) should not follow the departed (husband). The law regarding women may or may not apply to the other castes (than Brahmans)."

This stanza shows that in the Vedic period the primitive custom of self-immolation of the widow was forbidden among those who represented the progressive elements of the population, and was only occasionally practised by non-Brahman castes. It probably survived among those backward communities in whose culture primitive elements were stronger. Among the Brahmans and other castes that followed them levirate (*niyoga*) was commonly practised. The earliest extent Dharmasutras make on reference to the mounting of the funeral pyre of the deceased husband by the widow and provide *niyoga* only. It is stated in the *Dharmasutra* of Gautama (xviii, 4-6) :

> "A woman whose husband is dead and who desires offspring (may bear a son) to her brother-in-law. Let her obtain the permission of her gurus, ... (On failure of a brother-in-law she may obtain) by a Sapinda, a Sagotra, a Samanapravara, or one who belongs to the same caste."

Vasishtha in his *Dharmasutra* (xvii, 55-56) ordains that a widow should practise asceticism for six months, and then, after offering funeral oblations to her deceased husband, she may live

with another man for offspring. Baudhayana in his *Dharmasutra* extends this period of asceticism to full one year. So it will be seen that the *Brihaddevata* and the earliest Brahmanic codes gives greater prominence to *Niyoga* or the appointment of a widow to have issue by another man than to asceticism. This preference for *Niyoga* of the oldest Brahmanic codes fits in well with the other aspects of early Brahmanic or Vedic civilization characterised by love of life and abherence of the renunciation of the world and of suicide.

A different type of mentality finds expression in the code of Manu which prescribes life-long asceticism for the widow (v. 155-158) and condemns *niyoga* (ix. 65). This provision of life-long asceticism for the widow by Manu is in harmony with his approval of renunciation of the world and entering the order of hermits in the wood (*Vanaprastha*) and of wandering religious mendicants in old age, whereas the Dharmasutras of Gautama, Vasishtha, Baudhayana and Apastamba disapprove the adoption of ascetic life for man.

Immolation of the widow represents another, a non-progressive primitive type of mentality. The standard authority for the performance of *Sati*, as we have stated above, is a group of stanzas attributed to angiras and others, wherein the high reward of the rite is described. These are first referred to by Medhatithi and quoted in fully by Vijnanesvara. In describing the reward that awaits the Sati and her deceased husband these authors go to absurd lengths. I shall quote one of their stanzas in Raja Rammohun Roy's translation :

"Even though the man had slain a brahmun, or returned evil for good, or killed an intimate friend, the woman expatiates those crimes." (p. 9)

The meaning of this stanza is that wife's self-immolation cleanses the husband of the great sin (*mahapataka*) of *brahmahatva*, brahman-slaughter. But even our Raghunandana could not swallow this statement without qualification. He writes :

तव चैहि्क ब्रह्मघ्नपतेदांहनिषेधाञ्जन्मान्तरीय तत्पापवत एव महमरणोहार: ।

"As the cremation of a (deceased) husband guilty of slaying brahman in this life is forbidden, the self-immolation of the

wife saves a husband from the sin of slaying brahman in a previous birth."

Inspite of the text of Angiras, Harita and others, prescribing self-immolation of the widow, the statement of Saunaka in the Brihaddevata quoted above could not be ignored. Vijnanesvara and others tried to avoid the difficulty by quoting texts enjoining that, like widows of other castes, a brahman widow should not burn herself in a separate pile, but must ascend the pile of her deceased husband. The terms *anugamana* and *anumarana* are used to denote the self-immolation of the widow, not only in text that prescribe the rite, but also in texts that forbid the brahman women to practise the rite. So the language of the texts does not justify the observation of Vijnanesvara and others that what is forbidden for the brahman woman is not self-immolation on the funeral pyre of the husband, but only self-immolation on a separate pyre. Raghunandana distinguishes *anumarana* from *sahamarana*, and following him, Raja Rammohun Roy translates *anumarana*, post-cremation, and *sahamarana*, con-cremation. But, the word *sahamarana* does not occur in the texts and it is not used by older compilers of digests like Vijnanesvara, Aparaditya and Madhava.

The foregoing sketch of the history of Sati may be summed up thus :

(1) As stated by Saunaka in the Brihaddevata, a Vedic (Brahmana) text prohibited the practice of self-immolation of the widow, and this injunction was not only followed by brahmans, but, with rare exceptions, by non-brahman castes who followed the brahmans,

(2) In course of time the practice became more popular among the non-brahman castes. Therefore, the brahman law-makers to prevent its spread among the brahmans, prohibited its practice by brahmans in the name of Brahma.

(3) This fresh injunction having proved effective, later law-yers, explained it away by saying that what was forbidden is self-immolation by mounting a separate pyre.

The lesson that we derive from the history of *Sati*, therefore,

is that the brahmans originally regarded *Sati* as a sinful practice and only withdrew their opposition as a result of the pressure exercised by the folk-custom. After fully discussing the texts relating to *Sati* Raja Rammohun Roy comes to very nearly the same conclusion. In the concluding portion of tract No. 3 he writes :

> Hence Concremation, in their opinion, is the least virtuous act that a widow can perform." (p. 61)

In dealing with what they consider as social abuse modern reformers would do well to follow the method adopted by Raja Rammohun Roy. They may not have his faith, but they ought to approach the time-honoured customs and superstitions in a sympathetic spirit and first endeavour to trace their origins and development. This historical method is likely to disarm opposition.

20

RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY'S TRACTS ON SATI : 1818-1831

II

A.K. SEN AND J.K. MAJUMDAR

The question of Suttee had, very early, attracted the attention of the East India Company. Missionaries and other social reformers had been, for a long time, agitating both in India and in England, for the abolition of this custom which appeared to them to go directly against all considerations of humanity. During the administration of Lord Moira and Amherst an order was issued requiring magistrates to take steps that Suttees might perform their sacrifice at their pleasure and that no one should be allowed to persuade or use any compulsion. In 1818, however, the orthodox supporters of Suttee drew up and actually transmitted to the Honourable the Vice-President in Council a petition to repeal the orders in force against illegal proceedings in connection with the rite. It was, consequently, felt necessary by the liberal section of the community to address a counter-petition to the Governor-General in Council lest the orthodox petition should be "considered as expressive of the sentiments of the majority or any other portion of the inhabitants of Calcutta beyond that of the individuals who have been influenced to sign the said petition." (p. 84)

This counter-petition was published in the Asiatic Journal for 1819. It presents interesting points of resemblance with the standpoint and style of Rammohun. It lays the same emphasis on the

cruelties associated with the performance of the rite as the First Conference on the Practice of Burning Widows Alive.[1] Like this treatise again, the petition quotes Manu "whose authority is equal to that even of the Veds" positively enjoining widows to lend a life of abstinence from sensual gratifications;[2] and invokes the Vedant and the Geeta against "acts done with the view of future temporary reward."[3] The style, itself, adorned as it is with sonorous phrases and weighty clauses is peculiarly reminiscent of Rammohun's other writings. Miss Collet points out that the petition "bears traces of his hand": but she objects to one paragraph[4] "reflecting very harshly on Mahommedans so unlike Rammohun that it must have come from another source." But we find that Rammohun refers in his "Brief Remarks regarding Modern. Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females" to Mussulmans as introducing "their own tyrannical systems of Government" "*destroying temples*, universities and all other sacred and literary establishments." It is, therefore, necessary to include it among the works of Rammohun.

Now that the entire question had been brought to the notice of Europeans, it was thought desirable that Rammohun's First Conference should be translated into English and this was done in November, 1818.

The orthodox party, however, did not remain idle. A pamphlet in small, quarto pp. 48 was drawn up by some of the Pundits in Calcutta as an answer to the 1st Conference of Rammohun. Sent forth without any name or title-page the pamphlet was written in the form of a dialogue between Bidhaok (an advocate) and Nibedhok (an apponent). A manuscript note on the first blank leaf informed the reader that it was published by Cashee-nath-Turkagish by the desire of Cala-chand-Bhose. This work was evidently intended for the perusal of Europeans also, as an English translation was perfixed to the original. The following will give us some idea of its trend of reasoning :

(i) It is ordained by the Sankha, Smrittee, Poorans and other Sacred Books, that the women on the death of their husbands should die in *Suhu-muruna*, that is to burn (should burn themselves alive with the corpse of their respective husbands; and that, in want of the corpse,

(they) should die in *Unoo-muruna,* that is to burn (should burn) with something to their husbands."

(ii) This is followed by quotations from Angira, Purasura Hareeta, and Muhabharata all recommending the practice from advantages the widow is deluded with the hope of obtaining.

(iii) The Advocate next proceeds to interpret the saying of Vishnu-rishee who suggests two alternatives, asceticism and concremation, regarding both as purely optional. But it being liable to eight faults asceticism is reserved only for those who cannot ascend the pyre.[5]

(iv) He now takes up the case of Munoo who prescribes asceticism for widows. This he tries to get rid of by quoting the following saying from Juymini—"where there arises any inconsistency among laws, that maintained by many is preferable" and hence the recommendations of Ungira, Hareet and others should outweight the law of Munoo. He further adduces a passage from the Rig-Veda recommending the practice and concludes that the law of Munoo on that subject means nothing more than that a woman who may, by any accident, be prevented from performing *Suhumurun* or *unoo-murun* ought to devote her self to a life of austerity.

When the Opponent points out that Veda itself forbids the self-immolation of widows "in hopes of attaining Surga or bliss in heaven" as "by means of living still the duties usual and occasional can be performed for purifying the mind" and as by hearing of and fixing our mind on Brahma we can attain final beatitude" the Advocate replies that when one Smritj appears to have one meaning and another a different one both are held to be as law and then adds triumphantly "see therefore that a woman's burning herself for the sake of connubial happiness in heaven has no way been forbidden"; if she wishes final beatitude she may embrace a life of austerities.[6]

(v) The Opponent quotes *Kuthopanishut* and *Geeta* to prove that acts done for rewards must be regarded as degrading in nature. The Advocate answers : "Listen then to a Smriti 'A' man wishing heaven for himself shall perform Ushwamedha-jauga', and again, 'A man wishing heaven

for himself shall perform Jotistum Jauga.' These and other *Sruties*, are they to lose their spirits. That is to have "no effect ? Say what is your answer." They are indeed as the opponent himself concedes) for those who, previously filled with "amours, wrath and covetousness," are not inclined to enter disinterestedly into the service of the Supreme God; else they, freed from all restrictions, would be "like an elephant without guide."[7]

(vi) When Nishedhok says, "If you maintain that disinterested actions are better than those self-interested, why do you, then, instead of permitting husbandless women to adopt the law of Brahmachurya, which gives final beatitude, endeavour to preserve the self-interested practices" of Suttee; the Advocate replies that the attainment of beatitude being by itself a self-interested motive. Suttee is preferable as it saves the husband and three generations and enables the woman "to get herself rid of her feminine sex."[8]

(vii) Moreover, says the Advocate, "it is very improper that the women who have never been conscious of so much as the meaning of the word wisdom shall be desired to follow the system of sacred knowledge;" "it would be attended with no other success than to condemn them both for the one and for the other"; *i.e.*, they would not lead the life of chastity recommended or they would be too dull to do it from proper motives.[9]

(viii) The Advocate even supports the cruelties associated with Suttee by pointing out that the Shastras (which he quotes) recommend the observation of the usages and customs of country. When the Opponent demurs that this will make the customary killing of man by men residing in forests and mountains blameless, the Advocate replies, "By no means, for the actions of these rude foresters are not approved by men of fidelity and laws on the head of *Suhumuruna* have been regularly maintained by holy sages, philosophers and the learned."[10]

(ix) "How can the Sunkulpa be completed," asks the Opponent, "because it is pronounced with a promise to mount a burning pile." instead of which they mount it before it touches fire". "Whatever you say" replies the

Advocate, "regarding the incompletion of the Sunkalpa, arises from you inattention : for should a little part of the village or cloth be consumed by fire, it is then said even by learned men, that the village or the cloth was burnt. In the same manner a little-burning pile is also called a burning pile, and in that case the Sunkalpa is not incomplete." He further seeks to justify the binding of widows to the funeral pyre in the following words : "In the aforesaid text of the Hareet it was expressed, that until the women themselves cause their bodies to be wholly consumed in the fire, they could not finally get rid of their sex. In which case should any part of their bodies, while burning asunder in the piles be slipped out thereof it cannot be wholly consumed"; hence they have to be bound to the pile.[11]

(x) The Advocate finally concludes by reciting an example from the Mutsya Pooran and pointing out that those who assist in the performance of Suttee reap glory for being associated with a religious act.

The pamphlet caused some commotion among the contemporaries of Rammohun especially among those Englishmen who were opposed to Suttee and it was fervently hoped by them (as an editorial in a journal of those days expressed) that "Rammohun should favour the British Public with an English translation of his reply" to this orthodox defence of what they regarded to be an inhuman practice. It is needless to point out that Rammohun rose equal the occasion and refuted the arguments of his opponent in his Second Conference (translated in 1820).

On the 14th January, 1830, a petition against the abolition of Suttee was presented to the Governor-General by the orthodox section of the Hindu Community in which Suttee was referred to as a "sacred duty" and any interference with the rite as "an unjust and intolerant dictation in matters of conscience." The Government was also cautioned against accepting interpretations of Hindu religious thought from persons "who have apostatized from the religions of their forefathers" and "defiled themselves by eating and drinking forbidden things in the Society of Europeans." It was accompanied by a paper of authorities signed by 123 Pundits who

sought to answer the arguments of Rammohun in his Second Conference.

They point out that the inference drawn from the text of Vishnoo that of the two alternatives, austerities and con-cremation, the first is of superior merit is not tenable; because from other texts it appears that here "the order of meaning has preference over that of reading"; hence concremation is preferable to asceticism. Moreover an ascetic life, if practised, is liable to the danger of a widow's falling away from the path of virtue. Nor can they accept the second argument that "austerities gradually purify the minds for, by succesion, it is the only cause of final beatitude which constituted the object of the most excellent spirits" and are, consequently, preferable to concremation which "gives a temporary and small degree of heavenly fruition"; for according to them, "it appears in law that it is inexpedient for a woman (who is capable to perform concremation which can be done by a short time suffering and which, after the enjoyment of many heavenly blessings bestow final beatitude)." There is also "no contriarity of the doctrines of Manu regarding concremation." In Nirnaya-sindhu there is a text from Manu which speaks of two alternatives giving the first place to con-cremation. Moreover, there are many duties, *nitya* or perpetual and *namitiya* or periodical, which have no place in his code; and Sruti in a famous text used in the sankulpa sanctions the rite.[12]

To counteract the impression made by the petition and the letter of authorities accompanying it the liberal part of the community presented, on the 16th January, an address to Lord William Bentinck eulogising him for the abolition of the rite. This address has been accepted on all hands as the composition of Rammohun. The Rajah also wrote an "Abstract of Arguments regarding the Burning of Widows" where, brushing aside all personalities, he successfully refuted the orthodox point of view.

Not satisfied with the reply of the Governor-General the Dhurmu Suva sent an Appeal to the King in Council against the abolition of Suttee. Rammohun was indefatigable in his exertions against this orthodox movement. He published and circulated in England a tract entitled "Some Remarks in Vindication of the Resolution Abolishing Female Sacrifices" while through his influence a counter-petition, presumably written by himself, was presented before the House of Lords by the Marquess of Lansdowne on June 13, 1832. The orthodox petition was heard before

the Privy Council composed of the Lord President (Marquess of Lansdowne) the Lord Chancellor, Marquess Wellerby, Earl Amherst, Lord John Russel, Sir Jas Graham, Sir E.H. East, the Master of the Rolls and Mr. Charles Grant who submitted a report against the petition. The orders passed by His Majesty in Council are quoted below :

Whereas this day there was read at the Board a Report from a Committee of the Lords of his Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, dated the 7th July instant, in the words following, *viz.*,—

Your Majesty having been pleased by your order in Council of the 11th of May, 1831, to refer unto this Committee the humble petition of certain Hindu inhabitants of Bengal, Benar and Orissa, & c., setting forth that (here the petition is insertee); the Lords of the Committee, in obedience to your Majesty's said orders of reference, had taken the said petition into consideration; and having heard counsel for the petitioners thereupon, and also on behalf of the East India Company, their Lordships do agree humbly to report as their opinion to your Majesty, that the said petition should be dismissed.

His Majesty, having taken the said Report into consideration, was pleased, by and with the advice of his Privy Council,to approve thereof and to order, and it is hereby ordered, that the said petition be, and the same is, hereby dismissed the Board.

This decision of the Privy Council sounded the death-knell of all agitations against the abolition of Suttee.

Notes and References

1. P. 84, *cf.* p. 13.
2. P. 86, *cf* p. 7.
3. P. 86, *cf.* pp. 10-11.
4. Pp. 85-86.
5. For Rammohun's answer *vide* pp. 23-27.
6. *Vide*, pp. 29-30.
7. *Vide*, pp. 35-37.
8. *Vide*, pp. 37-39.
9. *Vide*, pp. 39-42.
10. *Vide*, pp. 17-19.
11. *Vide*, pp. 49-57.
12. For Rammohun's answer to these arguments, *vide* pp. 58-66 and 70-79.

21

SOME REMARKS IN VINDICATION OF THE RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL IN 1829 ABOLISHING THE PRACTICE OF FEMALE SACRIFICES IN INDIA

RAMMOHUN ROY

The practice of burning Hindoo widows, on the funeral piles of their husbands, was abolished by the Government of Bengal, on the 4th of December, 1829, in consequence of which these unfortunate and deluded persons have been completely saved from destruction, for a period of two years and upwards. Certain Hindoo inhabitants of Calcutta, who find this humane measure detrimental to their own interests, have under the advice of an attorney of the Supreme Court, at the Presidency of Fort William, thought proper to bring the subject before the Privy Council, with the view of having the Regulation rescinded and the practice renewed.

2. Par. As to the propriety, or justice or humanity of re-establishing such a cruel usage, it my safely be left to the wisdom and discretion of the exalted individuals, before whom in this christian country and enlightened age, the subject is to be discussed.

3. Par. With regard to the question of policy, which to many statesmen seems paramount to justice, humanity, conscience, law and religion. It might have been alleged that the abolition would be an interference with the religious rites of the Hindoos, and would cause insurrection, perhaps revolution in the country, and terminate in the loss of the British possessions in India. On this point I beg to offer a few remarks.

First. If there had been any chance of popular commotion being excited by such abolition, it might have been expected immediately after the measure was adopted in the latter end of the year 1826. About two years and upwards however, passed, and no accounts have been received that any widow has been burnt, in opposition to the regulations of government, or even that any attempt at commotion has ever been made.

Secondly. From a reference to the printed official returns, (laid before Parliament) of the number of Suttees with the territories of the Presidency of Fort William, from 1815 to 1828, include, it appears that within the province of Bengal, including the city of Benares (to which place an immense number of the Bengalees, male and female, retire, from religious prejudices to end their days), and Patna, which is adjacent, and has been long united to Bengal, by political connection as well as by close and constant intercourse, the number of female sacrifices has mounted to 7941, whereas in the whole extent of the upper provinces, classed under the head of Bareilly, we find only 203 in a period of 14 years, (on an average about 14 in each year); consequently had there been any chance of any popular commotion, it might have been dreaded in Bengal particularly, where the practice chiefly prevailed. But, it is well-known that from education and want of physical energy, the natives of Bengal are the last persons in the world to be expected to raise (?) against public authority.

Thirdly. Even in Bengal a greater number of the most intelligent and influential of the natives, landholders, bankers, merchants, and others, felt so much gratified with the removal of the odium, which the practice had attached to their character as a nation, that they united in presenting an address of thanks and congratulation, on the subject, to the Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, on the 18th of January, 1830,[1] and in like manner, when his Lordship, in his progress to the upper provinces, arrived at Buxar, (situated between Patna and Benares), persons of the highest rank and respectability, supported by numerous inhabitants, presented another address, expressive of their satisfaction as the abolition of the horrible custom, as will apper by the Calcutta Government Gazettee of November 15th, 1830.

Fourthly. It was not religious devotion alone which prompted the generality, of the natives of Bengal, who carried on the practice of widow burning to such an extent; nor is that their motive for

wishing its re-establishment. But it is their worldly interest which many wish to serve under the cloak of religion. Since according to their law of inheritance (the Dayabhaga) a widow is entitled to inherit the property of her deceased husband, without regard to his condition in life, and therefore is a complete bar to the claims of the father, mother, brothers, sisters and daughters of the deceased, who have all consequently a direct interest in the destruction of the widow.* But in the upper provinces, where the Mitakshara is respected as the law of inheritance, according to which the rights of the surviving wife are more circumscribed, the relatives of the husband are not much interested in her death; and in these provinces it is found that the Suttees are comparatively very rare.**

Fifthly. Hence, it is obvious, that as the adherence of the Bengalees to this practice generally springs from selfish considerations of a worldly nature, the abolition of such a fertile source of intrigue and calculating cruelty cannot excite any apprehension of religious enthusiasm in those persons who are conscious of the unworthiness of the cause they advocate : even if the Bengalees had possessed physical energy, and a warlike education. These considerations (and many others might be added) are sufficient to shew, that policy by no means requires the re-establishment of the open perpetration of suicide and murder.

4. Par. It might be alleged, that the British Government has pledged itself not to interfere with the religious rights of its Indian native subjects; but, it must not be forgotten, that according to common sense, as well as from a reference to precedent and the practice of the local government during the whole period of its domination in India, it is clear, that this rule was always unequivocally meant to apply to religious observances which are considered

*"The whole wealth of a deceased husband, who has no male issue, shall belong to his widow, though there be brothers of the whole blood, paternal uncles, (daughters), daughter's sons, and other heirs." Colebrooke's translation of the Dayabhaga, Chap. XI, Sec. 1, Art. 3rd.

** A wife being chaste takes the whole estate of a man who being separated from his co-heirs and not subsequently reunited with them, dies leaving no male-issue. Colebrooke's translation of the Mitakshara, Chap. ii, Sec. 1, Art. 39. It should not be overlooked that amongst the Hindoos, brothers very generally, or almost always live in joint families, and very often first and second cousins also; consequenty the qualification of non-separation has almost annihilated the rights of the widow.

incumbent on the people, according to the principles of their own faith, and which are not a nuisance and outrage to public feeling. On this principle, the government. from the time to time, prohibited various practices performed in the name of religion : such as the perambulation of the streets by Nagas, (or noted devotees), infanticide and suicide under the car of Juggannath, the self-destruction and public burning of lepers, human sacrifices, etc etc.; it being found that these practices were only partially observed and consequently merely optional, not incumbent, since their omission involved no loss of civil rights, nor did it bring reproach on those who failed to observe them; while their observance was highly offensive, a nuisance to the public and a reproach to a civilised government. The case is precisely the some with respect to widow burning. For first, in regard to the number of widows burning in the province of Bengal, only one widow out of perhaps thirty, and in the upper provinces, one out of nine hundred and ninety-nine could be prevailed on to perform this horrid sacrifice; while all the rest lived in the enjoyment of their civil rights and social respect (as shown by thousands of judicial decrees); and again, on the score of nuisance, it is a source of greater offence and disgust to the public than the rest, from its being performed with more publicity and tumult, and exhibiting the most helpless of human beings expiring under the greatest sufferings. Therefore, a regard to consistency and its own character compelled the government to deal with this practice as they had done with the others before mentioned.

5. Par. In addition to its local observation of the option exercised by widows, of either living an austere life, or of burning themselves with the corpse of the husband, government was furnished with the verdicts of the Pandits of the Sadder Dewance Adawlut, and of the Supreme Court of Calcutta : who, notwithstanding their enthusiastic zeal in favour of the practice of concremation, felt compelled by the force of truth to acknowledge, that at most it was entirely optional; nay, that an austere life was more meritorious.

First. In reply to the question submitted to the Hindoo Law Officers of the Sudder Dewanee Adawlut, in March 1817, it was stated (p 174), that "the women who wishes to accompany her deceased husband, let her ascend the funeral pile. In some cases, the widow may be laid on the funeral pile, before it is lighted by the side of her husband. But, (p. 175) "if she be then destitute of the wish to perform the act of sahagamun (concremation) *she*

must be lifted off." Again (page 175), "If having arrived at the place of burning, she determine (Sic.) to burn the ceremony of depositing the widow must be again gone through. If she afterwards express a wish to rise, she must be lifted off."

Second. The Pandit of the Supreme Court (Mrityoonjay) states, (page 178) that according to the Jutta Mala Bilas "ascending the funeral pile is a voluntary act and not an indispensible one" (p. 182). "The alternative of lending an austere life being mentioned and any objection adverse to it, being removed by the comparison cited in the text, this alternative seems evidently to be recommended by the favoured side of the argument" (p. 182). "In a person who is careless about absorption and desirous to obtain a paradise of temporary and inconsiderable bliss the act of *anoogamun* (following the husband) is justifiable, but from this reasoning it appears evident that the leading of a virtuous life is preferred as the *superior* alternative and that the act of anoogamun is held to be of inferior merit" (p. 182). "No difference prevails with regard to the propriety of leading a life of austerity" (p. 183). "Not the slightest offence attaches either to the women who depart from their resolution (of burning) or to those who persuade them to relinguish their intentions." (p. 183).

6. Par. If we look further into the consequences arising from the successful exertion of European Orientalists, in translating Sanskrit works, in various branches of literature, into the English language, we find that the public is no longer entirely at the mercy of the Brahmans, in the interpretation of the Hindoo law, and Religious doctrine. For example, the translation of the institutes of Menu, by Sir William Jones, which is before the public, and which to use the language of that immortal translator of an immoral work, is a "system of duties, religious and civil, and of law, in all its branches, which the Hindoos firmly believe to have been promulgated in the beginning of the time by Menu the son or grandson of Brahma, or in plain language, the first of created beings and not the oldest only, but the holiest of legislators, a system so comprehensive and so minutely exact, that it may be considered as the institutes of Hindoo law." (Sir W. Jones's works, Vol. VII, p. 76, Preface).

7. Par. This great legislator, in prescribing the duties of widows, thus ordains : "Let her (the widow) *continue till death,* forgiving all injuries, performing harsh duties, avoiding every

sensual pleasure, and cheerfully practising the incomparable rules of virtue, which have been followed by such women, as were devoted to one only husband;" (Chap. V, Verse 158, p. 271) "and like those abstemious men, a virtuous wife ascends to heaven though she have no child if after the decease of her lord she devote herself to pious austerity," (Ver. 160). But widow "who from a wish to bear children slights her deceased husband by marrying again, brings disgrace upon herself here below, and shall be excluded from the seat of "her lord" (Ver. 161).

8. Par. Here Menu by the expression "Let her continue till death," imperatively commands the widows to live a life of virtue, piety, and austerity, discountenances her marrying again, and does not admit the idea of any such alternative as that of burning with the corpse of her husband.

9. Par. It cannot be alleged that the Ved may have justified the practice and superseded the authority of Menu : since the Ved itself declares that "whatever Menu pronounced was a medicine for the soul." (Vide Sir W. Jones's works, Vol. VII, p. 83, lines 21 and 23).

10. Par. Nor can it be alleged, that Ungira and some other legislators who recommend widow burning, and also profess to found their doctrines on the Veds, should be considered of equal authority to Menu : since on the contrary the Ved itself in the text above quoted, the authority of which all acknowledge to be supreme, sanctions every precept of Menu, and in addition to this Vrihaspati declares "that Menu held the first rank amongst legislators; because he had expressed in his code the whole sense of the Veda "that no code was approved which contradicted Menu." (Sir W. Jones's works, Vol. VII, p. 83, line 25).

11. Par. Therefore, any quotation from other authorities or detached passages attributed to Menu, but not to be found in his code, and inconsistent with it cannot be considered as of any validity. Then, whence, it may be asked arose a practice so repugnant to reason, and so contrary to the most ancient, and highest legislative authority of the Hindoos ? Only (1 reply) from the jealousy of their Princes, who were unable to tolerate the idea of their wives proving forgetful of them, and associating with other men after their deaths, and their dependants were induced to follow their foot-steps actuated by the same motives, and also by the influence of example, while their surviving relations did not fail to encourage

the practice, for the reasons above explained, to promote their own interests, and literary men of similar feelings have not been wanting, to support their views, by interpolations, and inventions, under the name of traditions, and quotations, from the Poorans and Tantras, which all acknowledge to have no limit, or certain standard. But fortunately it is an established rule what every doctrine founded on these, is to be rejected, when on a fair critical examination it proves to be inconsistent with Menu, the only safe rule to guard against endless corruptions absurdities and human caprices.

NOTE AND REFERENCE

1. Vide the Bengal Hurkaru or the Indian Gazette, of the 18th of January, 1830.

22

ABSTRACT OF THE ARGUMENTS REGARDING THE BURNING OF WIDOWS CONSIDERED AS A RELIGIOUS RITE

RAMMOHUN ROY

Several Essays Tracts and Letters, written in defence of or against the practice of burning Hindoo widows alive, have for some years past attracted the attention of the public. The arguments therein adduced by the parties being necessarily scattered, a complete view of the question cannot be easily attained by such readers as are precluded by their immediate avocations from bestowing much labour in acquiring information on the subject. Although the practice itself has now happily ceased to exist under the Government of Bengal,* nevertheless, it seems still desirable that the substance of those publications should be condensed in a concise but comprehensive manner, so that enquirers may, with little difficulty, be able to form a just conclusion, as to the true light in which this practice is viewed in the religion of Hindoos. I have, therefore, made an attempt to accomplish this object hoping that the plan pursued may be found to answer this end.

The first point to be ascertained is, whether or not the practice of burning widows alive on the pile and with the corpse of their husbands, is imperatively enjoined by the Hindoo religion. To this question, even the staunch advocates for Concremation must

*The administration to which this distinguished merit is due, consisted of Lord W.C. Bentinck, governor general; Viscount Combermere, Commander-in-Chief; W.B. Baylay, Eq, and Sir C.T. Metealfe, members of council.

reluctantly give a negative reply, and unavoidably concede the practice to the option of widows. This admission on the part is owing to two principal considerations, which it is now too late for them to feign to overlook. First, because Munoo in plain terms enjoins a widow to "*continue till death* forgiving all injuries performing austere duties, avoiding every sensual pleasure, and cheerfully practising the incomparable rules of virtue which have been followed by such women as were devoted to one only husband" (Ch. v. Ver. 158). So Yagnuvulkyu inculcates the same doctrine : "A widow shall live under care of her father, mother, son, brother, mother-in-law, father-in-law, or uncle; since, on the contrary, she shall be liable to reproach," (Vide Mitakshura, Ch. I). Secondly, because an attempt on the part of the advocates for concremation to hold out the act as an incumbent duty on widows, would necessarily bring a stigma upon the character of the living widows, who have preferred a virtuous live to concremation, as charging them with a violation of the duty said to be indispensable. These advocates, therefore, feel deterred from giving undue praise to a few widows choosing death on the pile, to the disgrace of a vast majority of that class preferring a virtuous life. And in consideration of these obvious circumstances, the celebrated Smarttu Rughoonundun, the latest commentator on Hindoo law in Bengal, found himself compelled to expound the following passage of Unggira : "there is no other course for a widow beside concremation; " as "conveying exaggerated praise of the adoption of that course."

The second point is, that in case the alternative be admitted, that a widow may either live a virtuous life, or burn herself on the pile of her husbands it should next be determined, whether both practices are esteemed equally meritorious, or one be declared preferable to the other. To satisfy ourselves on this question, we should first refer to the Veds, whose authority is considered paramount; and we find in them a passage most pointed and decisive against concremation, declaring that "from a desire during life of future fruition, life ought not to be destroyed" (Vide Mitakshura, Ch. 1.) While the advocate of concremation quote a passage from the Veds, of a very abstruse nature, in support of their position, which is as follows : "O fire, let these women, with bodies anointed with clarified butter, eyes coloured with collyrium and void of tears, enter thee, the parent of water, that they may not be separated from their husbands, themselves sinless, and jewels amongst

women." This passage (if genuine) does not, in the first place, enjoin widows to offer themselves as sacrfices. Secondly, no allusion whatever is made in it to voluntary death by a widow *with the corpse of her husband.* Thirdly. the phrase "these women" in the passage, literally implies women then present. Fourthly, some commentators consider the passage as conveying an allegorical allusion to the constellations of the moon's path, which are invariably spoken of in Sungskrit in the feminine gender : butter implying the milky path : collyrium meaning unoccupied space between one star and another; husbands signifying the more splendid of the heavenly bodies; and entering the fire, or, properly speaking, ascending it indicating the rise of the constellations though the south-east horizon, considered as the abode of fire. Whatever may be the real purport of this passage, no one ever ventured to give it an interpretation as *commanding* widows to burn themselves on the pile and with the corpse of their husbands.

We next direct attention to the Smrittee, as next in authority to the Veds. Munoo, whose authority supersedes that of other law-givers, enjoins widows to live a virtuous life, as already quoted. Yagnuvulkyu and some others have adopted the same mode of exhortation. On the other hand, Unggira recommends the practice of concremation, saying : "That a woman who, on the death of her husband *ascends the burning pile* with him, is exalted to heaven as equal to Uroondhooti". So Vyas says, "a pigeon devoted to her husband, after his death, *entered the flames,* and, ascending to heaven, she there found her husband. "She who follows her husband to another world, shall dwell in a region of glory for so many years as there are hairs in the human body or thirty-five millions" Vishnoo, the saint lays down this rule : "After the death of her husband, a wife should live as an ascetic or ascend his pile" Hareet and others have followed Unggira in recommending concremation.

The above quoted passages from Unggira and others, recommend concremation on the part of widows, as means to obtain future carnal fruition : and accordingly, previous to their ascent on the pile, all widows invariably and, solemnly declare future fruition as their object in concremation. But, the Bhugvudgeeta, whose authority is considered the most sacred by Hindoos of all persuasions, repeatedly condemens rites performed for fruition. I here quote a few passages of that book. "All those ignorant persons

who attach themselves to the words of the Shastras that convey promises of fruition, consider those extravagant and alluring passages as leading to real happiness; and say besides them there is no other reality. Agitated in their minds by those desires, they believe the abodes of the celestial gods to be the chief object, and they devote themselves to those texts which treat of ceremonies and their fruits, and entice by promises of enjoyment. Such people can have no real confidence in the Supreme Being." "Observers of rites, after the completion of their rewards, return to earth. Therefore, they, for the sake of rewards, repeatedly ascend to heaven and return to the world, and cannot obtain eternal bliss."

Munoo repeats the same : "Whatever act is performed for the sake of gratification in this world or the next, is called *Pruvurtuk*, as leading to the temporary enjoyment of the mansions of gods; and those which are performed according to the knowledge respecting. God are called *Nivurtuk*, as means to procure release from the five elements of this body; that is, they obtain eternal bliss."

The author of the Mitakshura, a work which is considered as a standard of Hindoo Law throughout Hindoostan, referring on one hand, to the anthority of Munoo, Yagnuvulkyu, the Bhugvudgeeta, and similar sacred writings, and to the passages of Unggira. Hareet, and Vyas on the other hand, and after having weighed both sides of the question, declares that "the widow who is not desirous of eternal "beatitude but who wishes only for a perishable and small degree of future fruition, is authorized to accompany her husband." Smartu Rughoonundun, the modern expounder of law in Bengal, classes concremation among the rites holding out promise of fruition; and this author thus inculcates : "Learned men should not endeavour to persuade the ignorant to perform rites holding out promises of fruition." Hence concremation, in their *opinion, is the least* virtuous act that a widow can perform.*

*Hindoos are persuaded to believe that Vyas, considered as an inspired writer among the ancients, composed and left behind him numerous and voluminous works under different titles, as Muha Poorans, Itihashes, Sunghita, Suriti and etc., to an extent that no man, during the ordinary course of life, could prepare. These, however, with a few exceptions, exist merely in name and those that are genuine bear the commentaries of celebrated authors. So the Tuntrus, or works ascribed to State as their author, are esteemed as consisting of innumerable millions of volumes, though only a very few, comparatively, are to be found. Debased characters among this unhappy people, taking advantage

The third and the last point to be ascertained is, whether or not *the mode* of concremation prescribed by Hareet and others was ever duly observed ? The passages recommending concremation, as quoted by these expounders of law, require that a widow, resolving to die after the demise of her husband, should *voluntarily* ascend and enter the flames to destroy her existence* : allowing her, at the same time, an opportunity of retracting her resolution, should her courage fail from the alarming sight or effect of the flames, and of returning to her relatives, performing a penance for abandoning the sacrifice or bestowing the value of a cow on a Brahmun. Hence, as *voluntarily ascending* upon and *entering into the flames*, are described as indispensably necessary for a widow in the performance of this rite, the violation of one of these provisions renders the act mere suicide, and implicates, in the guilt of female murder, those that assist in its perpetration, even according to the above quoted authorities, which are themselves of an inferior order. But no one will venture to assert that the provisions, prescribed in the passages adduced have ever been observed; that is, no widow ever voluntarily *ascended* on and *entered* into the *flames* in the fulfilment of this rite. The advocates for concremation have been consequently driven to the necessity of taking refuge in *usage*, as justifying both suicide and female murder, the most heinous of crimes.

We should not omit the present opportunity of offering up thanks to Heaven, whose protecting arm has rescued our weaker sex from cruel murder, under the cloak of religion; and our character, as a people, from the contempt and pity with which it has been regarded, on account of this custom by all civilized nations on the surface of the globe.

of this circumstances, have secretly composed forged works and passages, and published them as if they were genuine, with the view of introducing new doctrines, new rites, or new prescripts of secular law. Although they have frequently succeeded by these means in working on the minds of the ignorant, yet the learned have never admitted the authority of any passage or work alleged to be sacred, unless it has been quoted or expounded by one of the acknowledged and authoritative commentators.

23

CONFERENCES* BETWEEN AN ADVOCATE FOR, AND AN OPPONENT OF, THE PRACTICE OF BURNING WIDOWS ALIVE

RAMMOHUN ROY

I

Advocate : I am surprised that you endeavour to oppose the practice of Concremation and Postcremation of Widows** as long observed in this country.

Opponent : Those who have no reliance on the Shastru, and those who take delight in the self-destruction of women may well wonder that we should oppose that suicide which is forbidden by all the Shastrus, and by every race of men.

Advocate : You have made an improper assertion, in alleging that Concremation and Postcremation are forbidden by the Shastrus. Hear what Unggira and other saints have said on this subject :

"That woman who, on the death of her husband, ascends the burning pile with him, is exalted to heaven, as equal to Uroondhooti. [1]

"She who follows her husband to another world, shall dwell

* Raja Rammohun Roy has used this method to refute the charges of the Advocates of the System of "Sati".

** When a widow is absent from her husband at the time of his death, she may in certain cases burn herself along with some relick representing the deceased. This practice is called Unoomurun or Postcremation.

in a region of joy for so many years as there are hairs in the human body, or thirty-five millions. [2]

"As a serpent-catcher forcible draws a snake from his hole, thus raising her husband by her power she enjoys delight along with him. [3]

"The woman who follows her husband expiates the sins of three races : her father's line, her mother's line, and the family of him to whom she was given a virgin. [4]

"There possessing her husband as her chiefest good, herself the best of women, enjoying the highest delights, she partakes of bliss with her husband as long as fourteen Indrus reign. [5]

"Even though the man had slain a Brahmun, or returned evil for good, or killed an intimate friend, the woman expiates those crimes. [6]

"There is no other way known for a virtuous woman except ascending the pile of her husband. It should be understood that there is no other duty whatever after the death of her husband."[7]

Hear also what Vyas has written in the parable of the pigeon :

"A pigeon devoted to her husband, after his death entered the flames, and ascending to heaven, she there found her husband."[8]

And hear Hareet's words :

"As long as a woman shall not burn herself after her husband's death, she shall be subject to transmigration in a female form." [9]

Hear too what Vishnoo the saint says :

"After the death of her husband a wife must live as an ascetic, or ascend his pile."[10]

Now hear the words of the Bruhmu Pooran on the subject of Postcremation :

"If her lord die in another country, let the faithful wife place his standals on her breast, and pure enter the fire." [11]

The faithful widow is declared no suicide by this text of the Rig Ved : "When three days of impurity are gone she obtains obsequies." [12] Gotum says :

"To a Brahmunee after the death of her husband, postcremation is not permitted. But to women of the other classes it is esteemed a chief duty."[13]

"Living let her benefit her husband : drying the commits suicide."[14]

"The woman of the Brahmun tribe that follows her dead

husband cannot, on account of her self-destruction, convey either herself or her husband to heaven.[15]

Concremation and Postcremation being thus established by the words of many sacred law-givers, how can you say they are forbidden by the Shastrus, and desire to prevent their practice ?

Opponent : All those passages you have quoted are indeed sacred law; and it is clear from those authorities, that if women perform Concremation or Postcremation, they will enjoy heaven for a considerable time. But attend to what Munoo and others say respecting the duty of widows; "Let her emaciate her body, by living voluntarily on pure flowers, roots, and fruits, but let her not when her lord is deceased, even pronounce the name of another man."

"Let her continue till death, forgiving all injuries, performing harsh duties, avoiding every sensual pleasure, and cheerfully practising the incomparable rules of virtue which have been followed by such women as were devoted to one only husband."[16]

Here Munoo directs, that after the death of her husband, the widow should pass her whole life as an ascetic. Therefore, the laws given by Unggira and the others where you have quoted, being contrary to the law of Munoo cannot be accepted; because the Ved declares, whatever Munoo has said is wholesome;"[17] and Virhuspati, "whatever "law is contrary to the law of Munoo is not commendable." [18] The Ved especially declares, "by living in the practice of regular and occasional duties the mind may be purified. Thereafter by hearing, reflecting, and constantly meditating on the Supreme Being, absorption in Bruhmu may be attained. Therefore from a desire during life of future fruition, life ought not to be destroyed." [19] Munoo, Yagnyuvlkyu, and others, have then, in their respective codes of laws, prescribed to widows the duties of ascetics only. By this passage of the Ved, therefore, and the authority of Munoo and others, the words you have quoted from Unggira and the rest are set aside; for by the express declaration of the former, widows after the death of their husbands may, by living as ascetics, obtain absorption.

Advocate : What you have said respecting the laws of Unggira and others, that recommended the practice of Concremation and Postcremation, we do not admit : because, though a practice has not been recommended by Munoo, yet, if directed by other lawgivers, it should not on that account be considered as contrary to

the law of Munoo. For instance, Munoo directs the performance of Sundhya, but says nothing of calling aloud on the name of Huri; yet Vyas prescribes calling on the name of Huri. The words of Vyas do not contradict those of Munoo. The same should be understood in the present instance. Munoo has commended widows to live as ascetics; Vishnoo and other saints direct that they should either live as ascetics or follow their husbands. Therefore, the law of Munoo may be considered to be applicable as an alternative.

Opponent : The analogy you have drawn betwixt the practice of Sundhya and invoking Huri, and that of Concremation and Postcremation, does not hold. For, in the course of the day the performance of Sundhya, at the prescribed time, does not prevent one from invoking Huri at another period; and, on the other hand, the invocation of Huri need not interfere with the performance of Sundhya. In this case, the direction of one practice is not inconsistent with that of the other. But in the case of living as an ascetic or undergoing Concremation, the performance of the one is incompatible with the observance of the other, *Scil.* Spending one's whole life as an ascetic after the death of a husband, is incompatible with immediate Concremation as directed by Unggira and others; and, *vice versa*, Concremation, as directed by Unggira and others, is inconsistent with living as an ascetic, in order to attain absorption. Therefore, those two authorities are obviously contradictory of each other. More especially as Unggira, by declaring that "there is no other way known for a "virtuous woman except ascending the pile of her husband," has made Concremation an indispensable duty. And Hareet also, in his code, by denouncing evil consequences, in his declaration, that "as long as a woman shall not "burn herself after the death of her husband, she shall be subject to transmigration in a female form," has made this duty absolute. Therefore, all those passages are in every respect contradictory to the law of Munoo and others.

Advocate : When Unggira says that there is no other way for a widow except Concremation, and when Hareet says that the omission of it is a fault, we reconcile their words with those of Munoo, by considering them as used merely for the purpose of exalting the merit of Concremation but not as prescribing this as an indispensable duty. All these expressions, moreover, convey a

promise of reward for Concremation, and thence it appears that Concremation is only optional.

Opponent : If, in order to reconcile them with the text of Munoo, you set down the words of Unggira and Hareet, that make the duty incumbent, as meant only to convey an exaggerated praise of Concremation, why do you not also reconcile the rest of the words of Unggira, Hareet, and others, with those in which Munoo prescribes to the widow the practice of living as an ascetic as her absolute duty ? And why do you not keep aloof from witnessing the destruction of females, instead of tempting them with the inducement of future fruition ? Moreover, in the text already quoted, self-destruction with the view of reward is expressly prohibited.

Advocate : What you have quoted from Munoo and Yagnya-vulkyu and text of the Ved is admitted. But how can you set aside the following text of the Rig Ved on the subject of Concremation ? "O fire ! let these women, with bodies anointed with clarified butter, eyes coloured with collyrium, and void of tears, enter thee, the parent of water, that they may not be separated from their husbands, but may be, in unison with excellent husbands, themselves sinless and jewels amongst women." [20]

Opponent : This text of the Ved, and the former passages from Hareet and the rest whom you have quoted, all praise the practice of Concremation as leading to fruition and are addressed to those who are occupied by sensual desires; and you cannot but admit that to follow these practices is only optional. In repeating the Sunkulpyu of Concremation, the desire of future fruition is declared as the object. The text therefore of the Ved which we have quoted, offering no gratifications, supersedes, in every respect, that which you have adduced, as well as all the words of Unggira and the rest. In proof we quote the text of the Kuthopunishut : "Faith in God which leads to absorption is one thing; and rites which have future fruition for their object, another. Each of these, producing different consequences, holds out to man inducements to follow it. The man, who of these two chooses faith, is blessed; and he, who for the sake of reward practises rites, is dashed away from the enjoyment of eternal beatitude." [21] Also the Moonduk Opunishut : "Rites, of which there are eighteen members, are all perishable : he who considers them as the source of blessing shall undergo repeated transmigrations : and all those fools who

immersed in the foolish practice of rites, consider themselves to be wise and learned, are repeatedly subjected to birth, disease, death and other pains. When one blind man is guided by another, both subject themselves on their way to all kinds of distress."

It is asserted in the Bhugvut Geeta, the essence of all the Smritis Poorans, and Itihases, that, all those ignorant persons who attach themselves to the words of the Veds that convey promises of fruition, consider those falsely alluring passages as leading to real happiness; and say, that besides them there is no other reality. Agitated in their minds by these desires, they believe the abodes of the celestial gods to be the chief object; and they devote themselves to those texts which treat of ceremonies and their fruits, and entice by promises of enjoyment. Such pe, ple can have no real confidence in the Supreme Being."[23] Thus, also do the Moonduk Opunishut and the Geeta state that, "the science by which a knowledge of God is attained is superior to all other knowledge."[24] Therefore it is clear, from those passages of the Ved and of the Geeta, that the words of the Ved which promise fruition, are set aside by the texts of a country import. Moreover, the ancient saints and holy teachers, and their commentatiors, and yourselves, as well as we and all others, agree that Munoo is better acquainted than any other law-giver with the spirit of the Veds. And he, understanding the meaning of those different texts, admitting the inferiority of that which promised fruition, and following that which conveyed no promise of gratification, has directed widows to spend their lives as ascetics. He has also defined in his 12th Chapter, what acts are observed merely for the sake of gratifications, and what are not. "Whatever act is performed for the sake of gratifications in this world or the next is called Pruburttuk, and those which are performed according to the knowledge respecting God; are called Niburttuk. All those who perform acts to procure gratifications, may enjoy heaven like the gods; and he who performs acts free from desires, procures release from the five elements of this body; that is, obtains absorption."

Advocate : What you have said is indeed consistent with the Veds, with Munoo, and with the Bhuguvut Geeta. But from this I fear, that the passages of the Veds and other Shastrus, that prescribe Concremation and Postcremation as the means of attaining heavenly enjoyments, must be considered as only meant to deceive.

Opponent : There is no deception. The object of those passages is declared. As men have various dispositions, those whose minds are enveloped in desire, passion and cupidity, have no inclination for the disinterested worship of the Supreme Being. If they had no Shastrus of rewards, they would at once throw aside all Shastrus, and would follow their several inclinations, like elephants unguided by the hook. In order to restrain such persons from being led only by their inclinations, the Shastru prescribes various ceremonies; as Shuenjag for one desirous of the destruction of the enemy; Pootreshti for one desiring a son; and Justishtom for one desiring gratifications in heaven, etc.; but again reprobates such as are actuated by those desires, and at the same moment expresses contempt for such gratifications. Had the Shastru not repeatedly reprobrated both those actuated by desire and the fruits desired by them, all those texts might be considered as deceitful. In proof of what I have advanced I cite the following text of the Opunishut. "Knowledge and rites together offer themselves to every man. The wise man considers which of these two is the better and which the worse. By reflection, he becomes convinced of the superiority of the former, despises rites, and takes refuge in knowledge. And the unlearned, for the sake of bodily gratification, has recourse to the performance of rites."[26] The Bhuguvut Geeta : "The Veds that treat of rites are for the sake of those who are possessed of desire; therefore, O Urjoon ! do thou abstain from desires."[27]

Hear also the text of the Ved reprobating the fruits of rites : "As in this world the fruits obtained from cultivation and labour perish, so in the next would fruits derived from rites are perishable."[28] Also the Bhuguvut Geeta : All those who observe the rites prescribed by the three Veds, and through those ceremonies worship me and seek far heaven, having become sinless from eating the remains of offerings, ascending to heaven, and enjoying the pleasures of the goods, after the completion of their reward, again return to earth. Therefore, the observers of rites for the sake of rewards, repeatedly ascend to heaven, and return to the world, and cannot obtain absorption."[28]

Advocate : Though what you have advanced from the Ved and sacred codes against the practice of Concremation and Post-cremation, is not to be set aside, yet we have had the practice prescribed by Hareet and others handed down to us.

Opponent : Such an argument is highly inconsistent with justice. It is every way improper to persuade to self-destruction, by citing passages of inadmissible authority. In the second place, it is evident from your own authorities and the Sunkulpu recited in conformity with them, that the widow should voluntary quit life, ascending the flaming pile of her husband. But, on the contrary, you first bind down the widow along with the corpse of her husband, and then heap over her such a quantity of wood that she cannot rise. At the time too of setting fire to the pile, you press her down with large bamboos. In what passage of Hareet or the rest do you find authority for thus binding the woman according to your practice ? This then is, in fact, deliberate female murder.

Advocate : Though Hareet and the rest do not indeed authorize this practice of binding, etc., yet were a woman after having recited the Sunkulpu not to perform Concremation, it would be sinful, and considered disgraceful by others. It is on this account that we have adopted the custom.

Opponent : Respecting the sinfulness of such an act, that is mere talk : for in the same codes it is laid down, that the performance of a penance will obliterate the sin of quitting the pile.[30] Or in case of inability to undergo the regular penance, absolution may be obtained by bestowing the value of a cow, or three kahuns of kowries. Therefore, the sin is no cause of alarm. The disgrace in the opinion of others is also nothing ; for good men regard not the blame or reproach of persons who can reprobate those who abstain from the sinful murder of women. And do you not consider how great is the sin to kill a woman; therein forsaking the fear of God, the fear of conscience, and the fear of the Shastrus, merely from a dread of the reproach of those who delight in female murder ?

Advocate : Though tying down in this manner be not authorized by the Shastrus, yet we practise it as being a custom that has been observed throughout Hindoostan.

Opponent : It never was the case that the practice of fastening down widows on the pile was prevalent throughout Hindoostan : for it is but of late years that this mode has been followed, and that only in Bengal, which is but a small part of Hindoostan. No one besides who has the fear of God and man before him, will assert that male or female murder, theft, etc., from having been long practised, cease to be vices. If, according to

your argument, custom ought to set aside the precepts of the Shastrus, the inhabitants of the forests and mountains who have been in the habits of plunder, must be considered as guiltless of sin, and it would be improper to endeavour to restrain their habits. The Shastrus, and the reasonings connected with them, enable us to discriminate right and wrong. In those Shastrus such female murder is altogether forbidden. And reason also declares, that to bind down a woman for her destruction, holding out to her the inducement of heavenly rewards, is a most sinful act.

Advocate : The practice may be sinful or any thing else, but we will not refrain from observing it. Should it cease, people would generally apprehend that if women did not perform Concremation on the death of their husbands, they might go astray; but if they burn themselves this fear is done away. Their family and relations are freed from apprehension. And if the husband could be assured during his life that his wife would follow him on the pile, his mind would be at ease from apprehensions of her misconduct.

Opponent : What can be done, if, merely to avoid the possible danger of disgrace, you are unmercifully resolved to commit the sin of female murder. But, is there not also a danger of a woman's going astray during the life-time of her husband, particulary when he resides for a long time in a distant country ? What remedy then have you got against this cause of alarm ?

Advocate : There is a great difference betwixt the case of the husband's being alive, and of his death; for while a husband is alive, whether he resides near her or at a distance, a wife is under his control; she must stand in awe of him. But after his death that authority ceases, and she of course is divested of fear.

Opponent : The Shastrus which command that a wife should live under the control of her husband during his life, direct that on his death she shall live under the authority of her husband's family, or else under that of her parental relations; and the Shastrus have authorized the ruler of the country to maintain the observance of this law. Therefore, the possibility of a woman's going astray cannot be more guarded against during the husband's life than it is after his death. For you daily see, that even while the husband is alive, he gives up his authority, and the wife separates from him. Control alone cannot restrain from evil thoughts, words and actions; but the suggestions of wisdom and

the fear of God may cause both man and woman to abstain from sin. Both the Shastrus and experience show this.

Advocate : You have repeatedly asserted, that from want of feeling we promote female destruction. This is incorrect, for it is declared in our Ved and codes of law, that mercy is the root of virtue, and from our practice of hospitality, etc., our compassionate dispositions are well known.

Opponent : That in other cases you show charitable dispositions is acknowledged. But by witnessing from your youth the voluntary burning of women amongst your elder relatives, your neighbours, and the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, and by observing the indifference manifested at the time when the women are writhing under the torture of the flames, habits of insensibility are produced. For the same reason, when men or women are suffering the pains of death, you feel for them no sense of compassion. Like the worshippers of the female deities, who, witnessing from their infancy the slaughter of kids and buffaloes, feel no compassion for them in the time of their suffering death; while followers of Vishnoo are tormented with strong feeling of pity.

Advocate : What you have said I shall carefully consider.

Opponent : It is to me a source of great satisfaction, that you are now ready to take this matter into your consideration. By forsaking prejudice and reflecting on the Shastru what is really conformable to its precepts may be perceived, and the evils and disagrace brought on this country by the crime of female murder will cease.

II

ON CONCREMATION : A SECOND CONFERENCE BETWEEN AN ADVOCATE AND AN OPPONENT OF THAT PRACTICE

Advocate : Under the title of Vidhayuk, or Preceptor, I have offered an answer to your former arguments. That, no doubt, you have attentively perused. I now expect your reply.

Opponent : I have well considered the answer that, after the lapse of nearly twelve months, you have offered. Such parts of your answer as consist merely of a repetition of passages already

quoted by us, require no further observations now. But as to what you have advanced in opposition to our arguments and to the Shastrus, you will be pleased to attend to my reply.

SECTION I

In the first place, at the bottom of your 4th page you have given a particular interpretation to the following words of Vishnoo, the law-giver : "After the death of her husband a woman shall become an ascetic, or ascend the funeral pile," implying that either alternative is optional. To this, you say, eight objections are found in the Shastrus, therefore, none of the alternatives must be preferred : that is to say, the woman who is unable to ascend the flaming pile shall live as an ascetic. This you maintain is the true interpretation ; and in proof you have cited the words of the Skundu Pooran and of Ungira. I answer : In every country all persons observe this rule, that meanings are to be inferred from the words used. In this instance the text of Vishnoo is comprised in five words : 1st. Mrite; "on death." 2d. bhurturi, "of a husband;" 3d. bruhmuchuryum, "asceticism;" 4th. tudunwarohunum, "ascending his pile;" 5th. va, "or". That is, "on the death of a husband, *his widow should* "become an ascetic, or ascend his pile." It appears, therefore, from asceticism being mentioned first in order, that this is the most pious conduct for a widow to follow. But your interpretation, that this alternative is only left for widows who are unable to ascend the flaming pile, can by no means be deduced from the words of the text; nor have any of the expounders of the Shastrus so expressed themselves.

For instance, the author of the Metakshura, whose authority is always to be revered, and whose words you have yourself quoted as authority in p. 27, has thus decided on the subject of Concremation : "The widow who is not desirous of final beatitude, but who wishes only for a limited term of a small degree of future fruition, is authorized to accompany her husband."

The Smurtu Bhuttachariya (Rughoo Nundun, the modern law commentator of Bengal) limited the words of Ungira, that "besides Concremation there is no other pious course for a widow" by the authority of the foregoing text of Vishnoo; and authorized the alternative of a widow living as an ascetic, or dying with her

husband ; explaining the words of Ungira as conveying merely the exaggerated praise of Concremation.

Secondly, from the time that Shastrus have been written in Sungskrit, no author or man of learning has ever asserted as you have done, that the person who, desirous of the enjoyments of heaven, is unable to perform the rites leading to fruition, may devote himself to the attaintment of final beatitude. On the contrary, the Shastrus uniformly declare that those who are unable to purse final beatitude, may perform rites, but without desires; and persons of the basest minds, who do not desire eternal beatitude may even perform rites for the sake of their fruits.

As Vusishthu declares : "The person who does not exert himself to acquire that knowledge of God which leads to final absorption, may perform ceremonies without expectation of reward."

"To encourage and improve those ignorant persons, who, looking only to pleasure, cannot distinguish betwixt what is God and not God, the Srooti has promised rewards."

BHUGUVUD GEETA

"If you are unable to acquire by degrees divine knowledge, be diligent in performing works with a view to "please me, that by such works you acquire a better state. If you are unable even to perform rites solely for my sake, then, controlling your senses, endeavour to perform rites without the desire of fruition."

Therefore, to give the performance to self-immolation, or to destruction of others, for the sake of future ward, over asceticism, which gives a prospect of eternal eatitude, is to treat with contempt the authorities of the Veds, the Vedant, and other Durshuns, as well as of the Bhuguvud Geeta and many others. As the Ved says : "Knowledge and rites both offer themselves to man; but he who is possessed of wisdom, taking their respective natures into serious consideration, distinguishes one from the other, and chooses faith, despising fruition; while a fool, for the sake of advantage and enjoyment, accepts the offer of rites."

Without entirely rejecting the authority of the Geeta, the essence of all Shastrus, no one can praise rites performed for the sake of fruition, nor recommend them to others; for nearly half of the Bhuguvud Geeta is filled with the dispraise of such works, and

with the praise of works performed without desire of fruition. A few of those passages have been quoted in the former conference, and a few others are here given.

"Works performed, except for the sake of God,' only entangle the soul. Therefore, O Urjoon, forsaking desire, perform works with the view to please God."

"The person who performs works without desire of fruition, directing his mind to God, obtains eternal rest. And the person who is indeed to fruition, and performs works with desire, he is indeed inextricably involved."

"Oh, Urjoon, rites performed for the sake of fruition are degraded far below works done without desire, which lead to the acquisition of the knowledge of God. Therefore, perform thou works without desire of fruition, with the view of acquired divine knowledge. Those who perform works for the sake of fruition are most debased."

"It is my firm opinion, that works are to be performed, forsaking their consequences, and the prospect of their fruit."

The Geeta is not a rare work, and you are not unacquainted with it. Why then do you constantly mislead women, unacquainted with the Shastrus, to follow a debased path, by holding out to them as temptations the pleasure of futurity, in defiance of all the Shastrus, and merely to please the ignorant ?

You have said that eight objections are to be found in the Shastrus to the optional alternative deduced from the works of Vishnoo. To this I reply. First, to remove an imaginary difficulty, a violation of the obvious interpretation of, words, whose meaning is direct and consistent, is altogether inadmissible. Secondly, former commentators, finding no such objection to the interpretation given to the words of Vishnoo, as allowing the optional alternative of asceticism or concremation, have given the preference to asceticism. The author of the Metakshura, quoting this text of Vishnoo in treating of Concremation, makes no allusion to such an objection, but finally declares in favour of asceticism.

Thirdly, even allowing an optional alternative to be liable to the eight objections, former authors have on many occasions admitted such an alternative. For example :

Srooti, "Oblations are to be made of wheat or of barley." But the meaning of this is not, according to your mode of

interpretation. "That if it cannot be made of barley, an offering is to be made of wheat."

"Burnt offering is to be made at sunrise of before "sunrise." In this instance your mode of explanation may be applied; but no authors have ever given such an interpretation, but all have admitted the alternative to be optional.

Here also, according to your opinion, the meaning would be, that if you cannot worship Shivu you should worship Vishnoo. But no authors have ever given such an interpretation to those words, and to give more or less worship to Shivu than to Vishnoo is quite contrary to the decision of all the Shastrus.

Fourthly, the following text has also been quoted by you in opposition to the optional alternative in question, taken as you assert from the Skundu Pooran :

> "On the death of her husband, if by chance a woman is unable to perform Concremation, nevertheless she should preserve the virtue required of widows. If the cannot preserve that virtue she must descend to hell." To confirm this text you have quoted the words of Ungira :
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> "There is no other pious course for a widow besides Concremation;" which you have interpreted, that "for a widow there is no other course so pious."

I answer, the words of Ungira are express, that there is no other pious course for a widow than Concremation. And the Smartu commentator, having thus interpreted the text, in reconciling it with the words of Vishnoo already quoted, declares, that it conveys merely exaggerated praise of Concremation.

But you, in opposition to the true meaning of the expression and to the interpretation given by the Smartu commentator, have explained those words to suit your own argument, that there is no other course more pious than that of Concremation. Perverting thus the meaning of the Shastrus, what benefit do you propose by promoting the destruction of feeble woman, by holding up the temptation of enjoyments in a future state ? This I am at a loss to understand.

If the passage you have quoted from the Skundu Pooran really exist, the mode in which the Smartu commentator has explained the words of Ungira ("there is to other virtuous "course") must be applied to those of the Skundu Pooran, *viz.*, that the text of the

Skundu Pooran which contradicts Munoo, Vishnu and others is to be understood as merely conveying exaggerated praise; because to exalt Concremation, which leads to future enjoyments that are treated as despicable by the Opunishuds of the Veds and Smriti and by the Bhuguvud Geeta, above asceticism, in which the mind may be purified by the performance of works, without desire that may lead to eternal beatitude, is every way inadmissible and in direct opposition to the opinions maintained by ancient authors and commentators.

Section II

In the latter end of the 7th page you have admitted, that the sayings of Ungira, Vishnoo and Hareet, on the subject of Concremation, are certainly at variance with those of Munoo; but assert, that any law given by Munoo, when contradicted by several other law-givers, is to be considered annulled : therefore, his authority in treating of the duties of widows is not admissible, on account of the discord existing between it and passages of Hareet and Vishnoo and others. With a view to establish this position you have advanced three arguments—the first of them is, that Vrihusputi says, whatever law is contrary to the "law of Munoo, is not commendable;" in which the nominative case, "whatever law," as being used in the singular number, signifies, that in case laws, given by a single person and in opposition to those of Munoo, they are not worthy of reverence; but if several persons differ from Munoo in any certain point, his authority must be set aside, I reply, it has been the invariable practice of ancient and modern authors, to explain all texts of law so as to make them coincide with the law of Munoo; they in no instance declare that the authority of Munoo is to be set aside, in order to admit that of any other law-giver. But you have, on the contrary, set aside the authority of Munoo, on the ground of inconsistence with the words of two or three other authors. In this you not only act contrary to the practice of all commentators, but moreover, in direct opposition to the authority of the Ved; for the Ved declares, "whatever Munoo lays down, that is commendable;" which text you have yourself quoted in p. 7. And as to what you have said respecting the words of Vrihusputi as being in the singular number, and therefore only applicable to a case in which Munoo is opposed by only

one law-giver, it is obvious that the word "whatever," being a general term, includes every particular case falling under it; and therefore his law must be followed, whatever number of authors there may be who lay down a different direction. And the reason of this is expressed in the former part of the verse of Vrihusputi, that "Munoo has in his work collected the meaning of the Veds." From this it follows, that whatever law is inconsistent with the code of Munoo, which is the substance of the Ved, is really consistent with the Ved itself, and therefore inadmissible. Admitting the justice of your explanation of Vrihusputi's text, that the autority of any individual law-giver, who is inconsistent with Munoo, must be set any aside; but that when several authorities coincide in laying down rule inconsistent with his law, they are to be followed; one might on the same principle give a new explanation to the following text:

> "The person who attempts to strike a Brahmun goes to the hell called Sutnuyat, or of a hundred punishments; and he who actually strikes a Brahmun, goes to the hell of Suhusruyat, or a thousand punishments."

Here, also, the noun in the nominative case, and that in the accusative case also, are both in the singular number; therefore, according to your exposition, where two or three persons concur in beating a Brahmun, or where a man beats two or three Brahmuns, there is no crime committed. There are many similar instances of laws, the force of which would be entirely frustrated by your mode of interpretation.

You have argued in the second place, that the practice of Concremation is authorized by a text of the Rig Ved, and consequently the authority of Munoo is superseded by a higher authority. I reply: in the 12th line of the 9th page of your tract, you have quoted and interpreted a text of the Veds, expressing that "the mind may be purified so as to seek a knowledge of God from which absorption may accrue, by the performance of the daily and occasional ceremonies, without the desire of fruition; therefore, while life may be preserved, it ought not to be destroyed." With this then and all similar texts, there is the most evident concord with the words of Munoo. Notwithstanding your admission to this effect, you assert that the authority of the Veds contradicts the declaration of Munoo. From the text already quoted, "that whatever Munoo has declared is to be accepted," it follows that there

can be no discrepancy between Munoo and the Ved. But there is certainly an apparent inconsistency between the text quoted from the ceremonial part of the Rig Ved authorizing Concremation, and that above quoted from the spiritual parts of the Ved, to which the celebrated Manoo has given the preference; well aware that such parts of the Ved are of more authority than the passages relating to debased ceremonies. He has accordingly directed widows to live, practising austerities. The text of the Rig Ved, of course, remains of force to those ignorant wretches who are fettered with the desire of fruition, which debars them from the hope of final beatitude. This too has been acknowledged by yourself, in p. II, 1, 17, and was also fully considered in the first Conference, p. 13, line 18. You cannot but be aware too, that when there is a doubt respecting the meaning of any text of the Ved, that interpretation which has been adopted by Munoo, is followed by both ancient and modern authors. In the Bhuvishyu Pooran, Muhadev gave instructions for the performance of a penance for wilfully slaying a Brahmun; but observing that this was at variance with the words of Munoo, which declare that there is no expiation for wilfully killing a Brahmun, he does not set aside the text of Munoo founded on the Veds by his own authority, but explains the sense in which it is to be accepted. "The object of the declaration of Munoo, that there is no expiation for the wilful murder of a Brahmun, was the more absolute prohibition of the crime; or it may be considered as applicable to Kshutrees, and the other tribes." The great Muhadev, then, did not venture to set aside the words of Munoo, but you have proposed to set up the texts of Hareet and Ungira as of superior authority.

Thirdly.—You have quoted, with the view of doing away with the authority of Munoo, the text of Juemini, signifying that if there be a difference of opinion respecting a subject, then the decision of the greater number must be adopted; and therefore, as the authority of Munoo, in the present instance, is at variance with several writers, it must yield to theirs. I reply; it is apparent that this text, as well as common sense, only dictates, that where those who differ in opinion are equal in point of authority, the majority ought to be followed; but if otherwise, this text is not applicable to the case. Thus, the authority of the Ved, though single, cannot be set aside by the concurrent authorities of a hundred law-givers; and in like manner the authority of Munoo,

which is derived immediately from the Ved, cannot be set aside by the contradicting authorities of the others either singly or collecti vely. Moreover, if Ungira, Hareet, Vishnoo and Vyas, authorized widows to choose the alternative of Concremation, or of living as ascetics; on the other hand, besides Munoo, Yugnyuvulkyu, Vusishthu, and several other law-givers have prescribed asceticism only. Why, therefore, despising the authorities of Munoo and others, do you persist in encouraging weak women to submit to murder, by holding out to them the temptations of future pleasures in heaven ?

SECTION III

The quotation from the Moonduk, Opunishud and the Bhuguvud Geeta, which we quoted in our first conference, to shew the light in which rites should be held, you have repeated; and have also quoted some texts of the Veds directing the performance of certain rites, such as.

"He who desires heavenly fruition shall perform the sacrifice of a horse."—In page 17, you have given your final conclusion, on the subject to this effect : "That rites are not prohibited, but that pious works performed without desire are preferable to works performed for the sake of fruition; and he also who performs those works without desire, is superior to him who performs works for the sake of fruition."—If then works without desire are acknowledged by you to be superior to works with desire of fruition, why do you persuade widows to perform works for the sake of fruition, and do not recommend to them rather to follow asceticism, by which they may acquire eternal beatitude ? And with respect to your assertion, that "rites are not prohibited," this is inconsistent with the Shastrus; for if all the texts of the Veds and law-givers, prohibiting rites, were to be quoted, they would fill a large volume : (of these a few have been already quoted by me in pp. 5 and 6.)—There are indeed Shastrus directing the performance of rites for the sake of fruition, but these are acknowledged to be of less authority than those which prohibit such rites; as is proved by the following text from the Moonduk Opunishud : "Shastrus are of two sorts, superior and inferior; of these the superior are those by which the Eternal God is "approached."

In the Bhuguvud Geeta Krishnu says: "Amongst Shastrus, I am those which treat of God."

In the Sree Bhaguvut is the following text: "Ill-minded persons, not perceiving that the object of the Ved is to direct us to absorption, call the superficially tempting promises of rewards their principal fruit; but such as know the Veds thoroughly do not hold this opinion."

The passages directing works for the sake of fruition are therefore adopted only for the most ignorant. Learned men should endeavour to withdraw all those ignorant persons from works performed with the desire, but should never, for the sake of profit, attempt to down them in the abyss of passion, Rughoo Nundun quotes and adopts the following words: "Learned men should not persuade the ignorant "to perform rites for the sake of fruition; for it is written in the Pooran, that he who knows the path to eternal happiness will not direct the ignorant to perform works with desire, as the good physician refuses to yield to the appetite of his patient for injurious food."

Section IV

In p. 17, 1, 13, of your treatise, you have said, that the Shastru does not admit that widows, in giving up the use of oil, and betel, and sexual pleasures, etc. as ascetics, perform works without desire, and acquire absorption. And for this you advance two proofs: the first, that it appears that Munoo directs that a widow should continue till death as an ascetic, *aiming* to practise the incomparable rules of virtue that have been followed by such women as were devoted to only one husband. From the word *aiming*, it follows, that the duties of an ascetic, to be practised by widows, are of the nature of those performed with desire. Secondly, from the subsequent words of Munoo it appears, that those widows who live austere lives ascend to heaven like ascetics from their youth; therefore, from the words ascending to heaven, it is obvious that the austerities that may be performed by them are for reward. I reply; I am surprised at your assertion, that austerities practised by widows cannot be considered as performed without desire, and leading to absorption; for whether austerities or any other kind of acts be performed with desire or without desire, must depend on the mind of the agent. Some may follow asceticism

or other practices for the sake of heavenly enjoyments, while others, forsaking desire of fruition, may perform them, and at length acquire final beatitude. Therefore, if a widow practise austerities without the desire of fruition, and yet her acts are asserted to be with desire of fruition, this amounts to a setting at defiance both experience and the Shastrus, in a manner unworthy of a man of learning like yourself. As to what you have observed respecting the word *aiming* in the text of Munoo, it never can be inferred from the use of that word, that the asceticism of widows must necessarily be with desire; for with the object of final beatitude, we practise the acquisition of the knowledge of God, which no Shastru nor any of the learned has ever classed amongst works performed with desire of fruition. For no man possessed of understanding performs any movement of mind or body without an object: it is those works only, therefore, that are performed for the sake of corporeal enjoyments, either in the present or in a future state of existence, that are said to be with desire, and that are, as such, prohibited, as Munoo defines. "Whatever act is performed for the sake of gratifications in this world or the next is called *Pruberttuk*; and those which are performed according to the knowledge of God are called *Niburttuk*."

As to your second argument, that widows leading an ascetic life are rewarded by a mansion in heaven, I reply; that from these words it does not appear that austerities should necessarily be reckoned amongst works performed for reward; for a mansion in heaven is not granted to those alone who perform works with desire, but also to those who endeavour to acquire a knowledge of God, but come short of attaining it in this life. They must after death remain for a long time the heaven called the *Brumhulok*, and again assume a human form, until they have, by perfecting themselves in divine knowledge, at length obtained absorption. The Bhuguvud Geeta says distinctly :

"A man whose devotions have been broken off by death, having enjoyed for an immensity of years the rewards of his virtues in the regions above, at length is born again in some holy and respectable family." Koolook Bhuttu, the commentator on Munoo, says expressly, in his observations on the text of his author, that those ascetic widows ascend to heaven like Sunuk Balukhilyu and other devotees from their youth. By this, it is clearly shewn, that those widows ascend to heaven in the same way as those

pious devotees who have already acquired final beatitude, which can only be attained by works performed without desire. And hence the austerities of widows must be reckoned amongst works without desire.

SECTION V

In page 18, you have asserted that a widow who undergoes Concremation has a higher reward than she who lives as a devotee; for the husband of the woman who performs Concremation, though guilty of the murder of a Brahmun, or of ingratitude or treachery towards a friend, has his sins, by her act, expiated, and is saved from hell, and her husband's, her father's, and her mother's progenitors, are all beatified, and she herself is delivered from female form.—I reply, you have stated in page 27, commencing at the 3rd line, that works without desire are preferable to those performed for the sake of fruition; while here again you say, that Concremation is perferable to asceticism. You have, however, assigned as a reason for your new doctrine, that Concremation saves progenitors as well as the husband. I have already shewn, that such promises of reward are merely held out to the most ignorant, in order to induce them to follow some kind of religious observance, and to withdraw from evil conduct. Therefore, to prefer works performed with a desire of fruition, to works without desire, merely on the ground of such exaggerated promises, is contrary to all the Shastru. If, in defiance of all the Shastrus, you maintain that such promises of reward are to be understood literally, and not merely as incitements, still there can be no occasion for so harsh a sacrifice, so painful to mind and body, as burning a person to death in order to save their (her ?) lines of progenitors; for, by making an offering of one ripe plantain to Shivu, or a single flower of Kurubeer, either to Shivu or to Vishnoo, thirty millions of lines of progenitors may be saved.

"He, who maketh an oblation of a single ripe plantain to Shivu, shall with thirty millions of races of progenitors ascend to the heaven of Shivu."

"By presenting a single Kurubeer, white or not white, to Vishnoo or Shivu, thirty millions of races of progenitors are exalted to heaven."

Nor is there any want of promise of reward to those who perform works without desire. In fact, rather more abundant

rewards are held out for such works than those you can quoted for the opposite practice. "Those who have acquired knowledge in the prescribed mode can, by mere volition, save any number of progenitors; and all the gods offer worship to the devotees of the Supreme Being." A volume filled with texts of this kind might be easily written. Moreover, should even the least part of any ceremony performed for reward be omitted or mistaken the fruits are destroyed, and evil is produced. But there is no bad consequence from a failure in works performed without desire, for the completion of these, even in part, is advantageous. In proof I quote the Bhuguvud Geeta : "Works without desire, if only commenced, are never without advantage; and if any member be defective, evil consequences do not ensue, as in works pertormed with desire. And the performance of even a small portion of a work without desire brings safety."

There is evidently a possibility of a failure in some portion of the rites of Concremation or Postcremation, particularly in the mode in which you perform the ceremony contrary to the directions of the Shastrus. What connection is there betwixt that mode and the enjoyment of temporary heavenly gratifications—a mode which only subjects the widow to the consequences of a violent death !

SECTION VI

Again in p. 17, 1, 3, you admit it to be more commendable for a widow to attend to the acquisition of knowledge than to die by Concremation; but afterwards, in order to persuade them to the practice of Concremation, and to prevent them from pursuing the acquisition of knowledge, you observe, that women are naturally prone to pleasure, are extremely devoted to works productive of fruits, and are always subject to their passions. To persuade such persons to forsake Concremation, in order to attempt the acquisition of knowledge, is to destroy their hopes in both ways. In support of your opinion you have quoted the Geeta : "Those ignorant persons who are devoted to works ought not to be dissuaded from performing them."

I reply; your object in persuading women to burn themselves may now be distinctly perceived; you consider women, even of respectable classes, as prone to pleasure, and always subject to their passions ; and therefore you are apprehensive lest they should lose

both prospects of hope, by giving up Concermation, and attempting to acquire knowledge. For this reason you lead them to the destruction of their lives, by holding out to them the temptation of future reward. It is very certain that all mankind, whether male or female, are endowed with a mixture of passions; but by study of the Shastrus, and frequenting the society of respectable persons, those passions may be gradually subdued, and the capability of enjoying an exalted state may be attained. We ought, therefore, to endeavour to withdraw both men and women from debased sensual pleasures, and not to persuade them to die with the hope of thereby obtaining sensual enjoyments, by which, after a certain period of gratification, they are again immersed in the pollutions of the womb, and subjected to affliction. The Shastrus have directed those men or women, who seek after a knowledge of God, to hear and reflect upon his doctrine, that they may escape from the grievous pain of this world; and they have also prescribed daily and occasional rites to be performed without the hope of reward by those who do not seek after divine knowledge, in order that their minds may be purified, and prepared to receive that knowledge. We, therefore, in conformity with the Shastru, make it our endeavour to dissuade widows from desiring future base and fleeting enjoyments, and encourage them to the acquisition of that divine knowledge which leads to final beatitude. Widows, therefore, by leading an ascetic life in the performance of duties without desire, may purify their minds and acquire divine knowledge, which may procure for them final beatitude. And consequently there is no reason why they should lose both objects of future hope by forsaking Concremation.

"Oh, Urjoon, by placing their reliance on me, women and those of the lower classes of Vueishyu and Soodru may obtain the highest exaltacion."

You, however, considering women devoted to their prssions, and consequently incapable of acquiring divine knowledge, direct them to perform Concremation; and maintain that, if any amongst them should not turn with their husbands, according to your final decision from the Shastrus, they must lose the hopes that belong to both practices; because, according to your opinion, they are entirely incapable of acquiring divine knowledge, and by not adopting Concremation, they give up the prospect of future gratifications. As to your quotation from the Geeta, to show that persons devoted to

works ought not to be dissuaded from the performance of them, it may be observed that this text applies only to rites offered without desire of reward, though applied by you to works performed for the sake of future enjoyment, in direct inconsistency with the authority of the Geeta. The object of this, as well as of all texts of the Geeta, is to dissuade men from works performed with desire. The Geeta and its Commentaries are both accessible to all. Let the learned decide the point.

You have quoted the following text of Vusishthu : "He who being devoted to wordly pleasures, boasts, saying, I am a knower of God, can neither obtain the consequences procurable from works, nor attain final beatitude, the fruit of divine knowledge."

I admit the force of this text. For whether a man be devoted to worldly pleasures or not, if he be a boaster, either of divine knowledge or of any other acquirement, he is indeed most despicable; but I am unable to see how this text, which forbids vain-glory is applicable to the question before us, which relates to the Concremation of widows.

SECTION VII

In your 20th page, you have started for us, that we do not object to the practice of Concremation, but to the tying down of the widow to the pile before setting it on fire. I reply; this is very incorrect, for it is a gross misrepresentation of our argument; because Concremation or Postcremation is a work performed for the sake of future reward, which the Opunishud and the Geeta, and other Shastrus, have declared to be most comtemptible. Consequently, relying on those Shastrus, it has been always our object to dissuade widows from the act of Concremation or Postcremation, that they might not, for the sack of the debased enjoyment of corporeal pleasures, renounce the attainment of divine knowledge. As to the mode in which you murder widows by tying them to the pile, we do extert ourselves to prevent such deeds, for those who are witnesses to an act of murder, and neglect to do any thing towards its prevention, are accomplices in the crime.

In justification of the crime of burning widows by force, you have stated, towards the foot of the same page, that in those countries where it is the custom for widows to ascend the flaming pile, there cannot be any despute as to the propriety of following

that mode; but where that is not the mode followed, and it is the practice for those that burn the corpse to place a portion of fire contiguous to the pile, so that it may gradually make its way to the pile, and at that time the widow, according to the prescribed form, ascends the pile; in this mode also there is nothing contrary to the Shastrus. You have at the same time quoted two or three authorities to shew, that rites should be performed according to the custom of the country, I reply; female murder, murder of a Brahmun, parricide, and similar heinous crimes, cannot be reckoned amongst pious acts by alleging the custom of a country in their behalf; by such customs rather the country in which they exist is itself condemned. I shall write more at a large to this purpose in the conclusion. The practice, therefore, of forcibly tying down women to the pile, and burning them to death, is inconsistent with the Shastrus, and highly sinful. It is of no consequence to affirm, that this is customary in any particular country—if it were universally practised, the murders would still be criminal. The pretence that many are united in the commission of such murder will not secure them from divine vengeance. The customs of a country or of a race may be followed in matters where no particular rules are prescribed in the Shastrus ; but the wilful murder of widows, prohibited by all Shastrus, is not to be justified by the practice of a few. From the Skundu Pooran : "In those matters in which neither the Veds nor law-givers give either direct sanction or prohibition, the customs of a country or of a race may be observed." If you insist that the practice of a country or of a race, though directly contrary to the directions of the Shastrus, is still proper to be observed, and to be reckoned amongst lawful acts, I reply, that in Shivukanchee and Vishnookanchee it is the custom for the people of all classes of one of those places, whether learned or ignorant, mutually to revile the god peculiarly worshipped by the people of the other—those of Vishnookanchee despising Shivu, and of Shivukanchee in the same manner holding Vishnoo in contempt. Are the inhabitants of those places, whose custom it is thus to revile Shivu and Vishnoo, not guilty of sin ? For each of those tribes may assert, in their own defence, that it is the practice of their country and race to revile the god of the other. But no learned Hindoo will pretend to say, that this excuse saves them from sin. The Rajpoots, also, in the neighbourhood of the Dooab, are accustomed to destroy their infant daughters; they also must not

be considered guilty of the crime of child-murder, as they act according to the custom of their country and race. There are many instances of the same kind. No Pundits, then, would consider a heinous crime, directly contrary to the Shastrus, as righteous, by whatever length of practice it may appear to be sanctioned.

You have at first alleged, that to burn a widow after tying her down on the pile, is one of the acts of piety, and have then quoted our argument for the opposite opinion, that "the inhabitants of forests and mountains are accustomed to robbery and murder; but must these be considered as faultless, because they follow only the custom of their country ?" To this, you have again repiled, that respectable people are not to be guided by the example of mountaineers and foresters. But the custom of burning widows, you say, "has been sanctioned by the most exemplary Pundits for a length of time. It is the custom, then, of respectable people that is to be followed, and not that of men of no principles." I answer : respectability, and want of respectability, depend upon the acts of men. If the people of this province, who have been constantly guilty of the wilful of murder women by tying them to the pile in which they are burnt, are to be reckoned amongst the respectable, then why should not the inhabitants of mountains and forests be also reckoned good, who perpetrate murder for the sake of their livelihood, or to propitiate their cruel deities ? To shew that the custom of a country should be followed, you have quoted a text of the Ved, signifying that the example of Brahmuns well versed in the Shastrus, of good understanding, and whose practice is no conformity with reason and the Shastrus, not subject to passion, and accustomed to perform good works, should be followed. And you have also quoted the words of Vyas signifying that the authorities of the Veds and Shastrus, as well as of reason, being various, the practice pointed out by illustrious men should be adopted. I reply; you have shew that the example of men versed in the Shastrus, and who act in conformity with reason and the Shastrus, should be followed; but can you call those who in definance of the Shastrus, wilfully put women to death by tying them down to the pile on which they are burned, illustrious, acquainted with the Veds, and devoted to acts prescribed by the Shastrus and by reason ? If not, their example is to be disregarded. If you can call those, who wilfully tie down women to put them to death, righteous and illustrious, then there is no instance of unrighteousness and depravity. I have already

said, that when any act is neither directly authorized nor prohibited by the Shastrus, the custom of the country, or of the race, should be the rule of conduct; but in the present case, the words are express in prescribing that the widow shall enter the flaming pile. But those who, in direct definance of the authority of the Shastrus, act the part of woman-murders, in tying down the widow to the pile, and, subsequently applying the flame, burn her to death, can never exculpate themselves from the sin of woman-murder. As to the words you have quoted from the Skundu Pooran, signifying that the arguments of one who has not faith in Shivu and Vishnoo can have no weight in the discussion of the legality of facts. I reply this text is applicable to those who worship images. Those who worship forms under any name and have no faith in Shivu and Vishnoo, their worship is vain, and their words to be disregarded. In the same way the words of the Koolarnuv : "He whose mouth does not give out the smell of wine and flesh, should perform a penance and be avoided, and is as an inferior animal. This is undoubted." These words are applicable only to those who follow the Tuntrus; and if all such texts are considered otherwise applicable than in relation to the sects to whom they are directed, there is no possibility of reconciling the variances betwixt the different Shastrus. The Shastru, treating of God, contains the following words : "Acts and rites that originate in movements of the hands, and other members of the body, being perishable, cannot effect beatitude that is eternal."

"Those that worship forms under appellations, continue subject to form and appellation; for no perishable means can effect the acquisition of an imperishable end."

"That man who considers the Being that is infinite, incomprehensible, pure, extending as far as space, and time, and vacuity, to be finite, perceptible by the senses, limited by time and place, subject to passion and anger, what crime is such a robber of Divine Majesty not guilty of ?" That is, he is guilty of those sins which are considered as the most heinous, as well as those that are considered ordinary sins. Therefore, the words of so sinful a person can have no weight in the discussion of the legality of rites.

SECTION VIII

You have stated in p. 9, that in the same manner as when part

of a village or of a piece of cloth has been burnt, the village or piece of cloth is said to be burnt, so if a portion of the pile is inflamed, the whole pile may be said to be flaming. Therefore, it may with propriety be affirmed, that widows do in this country ascend the flaming pile.

I reply : you may afford gratification to those who take delight in woman-murder by such a quibble, but how can you avoid devine punishment by thus playing upon words ?—for we find in the text of Hareet and of Vishnoo, the phrase "*pruvivesh hootasunum*", which means *entering into flames*, and the term "*Sumarohed dhutasunum*", signifying *ascending the flames*. You have interpreted these directions in this way : that, at a considerable distance from the pile, fire may be placed, and a piece of grass or rope may connect the fire with the pile; and that thus, by ascending the pile, which has not been in the smallest degree affected by the fire, the widow may fulfil the direction of ascending and entering the flaming pile. But I beg to remark, that both in the vulgar dialect and in Sungskrit, the word "Pruvesh" expresses only the introgression of one substance into another; as for example, "*Grihu pruvesh koriachhilam*", *I entered the honse*; the word entered cannot be used unless I actually passed into the house. If a long bamboo be attached to the house and a rope be fastened to that bamboo, no one can in any language say, that in merely touching that rope or bamboo he has entered that house. If a single billet of wood belonging to the pile were indeed inflamed, then you might say, according to your quibble regarding the burning of the cloth and of the village, that the pile was inflamed, and the flaming pile entered; but even this is by no means the case, in the mode in which your pile is used. Unless, however, the pile is so completely in fire that the flames may surround the whole of her body, the woman cannot be said to enter into flame. You must then, before you can justify your murder of helpless women, prepare a new dictionary; but there is no great probability of its interpretations being adopted by men of knowledge.

Towards the end of the 28th page you assert, that those who tie down the woman to the pile according to the custom of the country, are not guilty of violation of the Shastrus : for it is to be understood from the words of Hareet before quoted, that until her body be burnt, the widow cannot be delivered from female form, which implies that her body ought to be completely consumed; and

that it is on this account that those who burn her make her fast to the pile, lest by accident any part of the dead body should fall out of the pile, and fail of being consumed, and in that case the burning be incomplete. This practice of tying down therefore, is also conformable to the Shastru; and those who, in burning the woman, make her fast to the pile, are not therein guilty of any sin, but rather perform a pious act. In support of this assertion you have quoted the words of Apustumbu, signifying that he who performs an act prescribed by the Shastrus, or he who persuades or permits another to perform a prescribed act, ascends to heaven; and he who commits an act forbidden by the Shastru, or who pursuades or permits another to perform a prohibited action, sinks to hell.

I reply : you mean to say, that it is not in order to avoid the danger of the widow's flying from the pile from fear of the flames, or from pain, that she is made fast—but merely, lest any fregments of the body should fall from the pile unburnt, that she is tied down to the pile while alive. I ask, is it with an iron chain that the woman is made fast, or with a common rope ? For by securing the body by means of iron, the danger of portions of it being scattered from the pile may undoubtedly be avoided. But if, on the contrary, the body is bound with a common rope, the rope will be consumed before life has altogether quitted the body and the rope, when so burned, can be of no use in retaining within the pile the members of the body. So far have Pundits been infatuated, in attempting to give the appearance of propriety to improper actions, that they have even attempted to make people believe, that a rope may remain unconsumed amidst a flaming fire, and prevent the members of a body from being dispersed from the pile. Men of sense may now judge of the truth of the reason to which you ascribe the practice of tying down widows. All people in the world are not blind, and those who will go and behold the mode in which you tie down women to the pile, will readily perceive the truth or falsechool of the motives you assign for the practice. A little reflection ought to have convinced you of the light in which such an argument must be viewed, even by those of your friends who have the smallest regard for truth. As for the text you have quoted from Apustumbu, it might have, with more propriety, been cited by us, because it is established by that passage, that those who commit, parsuade to, or permit an improper action, descend to hell; for those that are guilty of wilful woman-murder, by tying women down with ropes, and

burning them to death, a practice unauthorized by the Shastrus; and considered as most heinous, and those who persuade or permit other to do so, are certainly obnoxious to the denunciation of Apustumbu. The pretext of custom of the country or of the object of preventing portions of the body from being scattered, will not exculpate them.

You have written, in page 29, that those who, by the permission of the widow, increase the flames by throwing wood or straw on the pile, are meritorious : for he who without reward assists another in a pious act, is to be esteemed most meritorious. In confirmation, you have quoted an anecdote of the Mutshyu Pooran, that a goldsmith, by affording his gratuitous assistance in a pious act, obtained a great reward. To this I have already replied : for if those who voluntarily commit woman-murder, by tying down a widow to the pile, and holding her down with bamboos to be burnt to death, are to be reckoned as performers of a pious act, those who assist them in so doing must be esteemed meritorious : but if this be a most heinous and debased crime, the promoters of it must certainly reason the fruits of woman-murder.

In your concluding paragraph you have quoted three texts, to prove the continual observance of this practice during all ages. The first recounting, that a dove entered into the flaming pile of her deceased husband. The second, that when Dhriturashtru was burning in the flames of his hermitage, his wife, Gandharee, threw herself into the fire. The wives of Busoodev (the father of Krishnu), of Buluram, of Prudyoomnu, and of others, entered the flaming piles of their respective husbands. These three instances occurred, as narrated by the Pooran writers, within intervals of a few years towards the close of the Dwapur Yoog. You ought then to have quoted other instances, to shew the continual observance of this practice throughout all ages. Let that be as it may, you yourself cannot fail to know, that in former ages there were, as later times, some who devoted themselves to the attainment of final beatitude, and others to the acquisition of future pleasure. Some too were virtuous, and some sinful; some believers, some sceptics. Amongst those, both men and women, who performed rites for reward, after enjoying pleasures in heaven, have again fallen to earth. Those Shastrus themselves declare this fact : but in the Shastrus that teach the path to final beatitude, the performance of rites for the sake of reward is positively forbidden. According to these Shastrus,

numberless women, in all ages, who were desirous of final beatitude, by living as ascetics, attained their object. Evidence of this is to be found in the Muhabharut and other works : "The widows of the heroic *Kooroos*, who fell valiantly with their faces to the foe, and were translated to the heaven of Bruhma, performed only the prescribed ceremonies with water," and did not burn themselves on the piles of their husbands. I have moreover, to request your attention to the fact, that in the three instances you have quoted, the very words "entered into fire" are used. In those three cases, then, it appears that the widows actually entered the flames, and therefore, whatever widow in the present time does not enter the fire, but is burnt to death by others tying her down to the pile, has not performed the ceremony according to the ancient practice you have instanced; and from rites so performed she cannot even be entitled to the temporary enjoyment of heavenly pleasures; and those who tie her down, and, pressing on her with bamboos, kill her, must, according to all Shastrus, be considered guilty of the heinous crime of woman- murder.

Section IX

Advocate.—I alluded, in p. 18, 1, 18, to the real reason for our anxiety to persuade widow follow their husbands, and for our endeavours to burn them, pressed down with ropes : *viz.*, that women are by nature of inferior understanding, without resolution, unworthy of trust, subject to passions, and void of virtuous knowledge; they, according to the precepts of the Shastru, are not allowed to marry again after the demise of their husbands and consequently despair at once of all worldly pleasure : hence, it is evident, that death to these unfortunate widows is preferable to existence; for the great difficulty which a widow may experience by living a purely ascetic life, as prescribed by the Shastrus, is obvious; therefore, if she do not perform Concremation, it is probable that she may be guilty of such acts as may bring disgrace upon her paternal and maternal relations, and those may be connected with her husband. Under these circumstances, we instruct them from their early life in the idea of Concremation, holding out to them heavenly enjoyments in company with their husbands, as well as the beatitude of their relations, both by birth and marriage, and their reputation in this world. From this many of them, on the death of their husbands, become desirous of accompanying them;

but to remove every chance of their trying to escape from the blazing fire, in burning them we first tie them down to the pile.

Opponent.—The reason you have now assigned for burning widows alive is indeed your true motive, as we are well aware; but the faults which you have imputed to women are not planted in their constitution by nature; it would be, therefore, grossly criminal to condemn that sex to death merely from precaution. By ascribing to them all sorts of improper conduct, you have indeed successfully presuaded the Hindoo community to look down upon them as contemptible and mischievous creatures, whence they have subjected to constant miseries. I have, therefore, to offer a few remarks on this head.

Women are in general inferior to men in bodily strength and energy; consequently the male part of the community, taking advantage of their corporeal weakness, have denied to them those excellent merits that they are entitled to by nature, and afterwards they are apt to say that women are naturally incapable of acquiring those merits. But if we give the subject consideration, we may easily ascertain whether or not your accusation against them is consistent with justice. As to their inferiority in point of understanding, when did you ever afford them a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity ? How then can you accuse them of want of understanding ? If, after instruction in knowledge and wisdom, a person cannot comprehend or retain what has been taught him, we may consider him as deficient; but as you keep women generally void of education and acquirements, you cannot, therefore, in justice pronounce on their inferiority. On the contrary, Leelavutee, Bhanoomutee (the wife of the prince of Kurnat), and that of Kalidas, are celebrated for their thorough knowledge of all the Shastrus : moreover in the Vrihudarunyuk Opunishud of the Ujoor Ved it is clearly stated that Yagnuvulkyu imparted divine knowledge of the most difficult nature to his wife Muitreyee, who was able to follow and completely attain it !

Secondly, you charge them with want of resolution, at which I feel exceedingly surprised; for we constantly perceive, in a country where the name of death makes the male shudder, that the female, from her firmness of mind, offers to burn with the corpse of her deceased husband; and yet you accuse those women of deficiency in point of resolution.

Thirdly, with regard to their trustworthiness, let us look

minutely into the conduct of both sexes, and we may be enabled to ascertain which of them is the most frequently guilty of betraying friends. If we enumerate such women in each village or town as have been deceived by men, and such men as have been betrayed by women, I presume that the number of the deceived women would be found ten times greater than that of the betrayed men. Men are, in general, able to read and write, and manage public affairs, by which means they easily promulgate such faults of women occasionally commit, but never consider as criminal the misconduct of men towards women. One fault they have, it must be acknowledged; which is, by considering others equally void of duplicity as themselves, to give their confidence too readily, from which they suffer much misery, even so far that some of them are misled to suffer themselves to be burnt to death.

In the fourth place, with respect to their subjection to the passions, this may be judged of by the custom of marriage as to the respective sexes; for one man may marry two or three, sometimes even ten wives and upwards; while a woman, who marries but one husband, desires at his death to follow him, forsaking all worldly enjoyments, or to remain leading the austere life of an ascetic.

Fifthly, the accusation of their want of virtuous knowledge is an injustice. Observe what pain, what slighting, what contempt, and what afflictions their virtue enables them to support ! How many *Kooleen* Brahmins are there who marry ten or fifteen wives for the sake of money, that never see the greater number of them after the day of marriage, and visit others only three or four times in the course of their life. Still amongst those women, most, even without seeing or receiving any support from their husbands, living dependent on their fathers or brothers, and suffering much distress, continue to preserve their virtue; and when Brahmans, or those of other tribes, bring their wives to live with them, what misery do the women not suffer ? At marriage the wife is recognized as half of her husband, but in after-conduct they are treated worse than inferior animals. For the woman is employed to do the work of a slave in the house, such as, in her turn, to clean the place very early in the morning, whether cold or wet, to scour the dishes, to wash the floor, to cook night and day, to prepare and serve food for her husband, father and mother-in-law, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, and friends and connections ! (for amongst Hindoos more than in other tribes relations long reside together and on this

account quarrels are more common amongst brothers respecting their worldly affairs.) If in the preparation or serving up of the victuals they commit the smallest fault, what insult do they not receive from their husband, their mother-in-law, and the younger brothers of their husband ! After all the male part of the family may satisfied themselves, the women content themselves with what may be left, whether sufficient in quantity or not. Where Brahmuns or Kayustus are not wealthy, their women are obliged to attend to their cows, and to prepare the cow-dung for firing. In the afternoon they fetch water from the river or tank; and at night perform the office of menial servants in making the beds. In case of any fault or omission in the performance of those labours they receive injurious treatment. Should the husband acquire wealth, he indulges in criminal amours to her perfect knowledge, and almost under her eyes, and does not see her perhaps once a month. As long as the husband is poor, she suffers every kind of trouble, and when he becomes rich she is altogether heart-broken. All this pain and affliction their virtue alone enables them to support. Where a husband takes two or three wives to live with him, they are subjected to mental miseries and constant quarrels. Even this distressed situation they virtuously endure. Sometimes it happens that the husband, from a preference for one of his wives, behaves cruelly to another. Amongst the lower classes, and those even of the better class who have not associated with good company, the wife, on the slightest fault, or even on bare suspicion of her misconduct, is chastised as a thief. Respect to virtue and their reputation generally makes them forgive even this treatment. If, unable to bear such cruel usage, a wife leaves her husband's house to live separately from him, then the influence of the husband with the magisterial authority is generally sufficient to place her again in his hands; when, in revenge for her quitting him, he seizes every pretext to torment her in various ways, and sometimes even puts her privately to death. These are facts occurring every day, and not to be denied. What I lament is, that, seeing the women thus dependent and exposed to every misery, you feel for them no compassion, that might exempt them from being tied down and burnt to death.

PART III

24

RAMMOHUN ROY : APOSTLE OF INDIAN AWAKENING

B.M. SANKHDHER

About 150 years ago, when an Indian ship carrying Rammohun Roy—a leader who had stood at the apex of Indian politics and social life for almost three long decades—touched the English shore on 18 April, 1831, and when this tall, well-built, handsome, aristocratic scholar-reformer passed through the streets of Liverpool, Manchester and London in his typical oriental, embroidered long grown and attractive shining turban, huge crowds of men, women and children rushed to see him. He was cheered as the "King of Ingee" and the people shouted : "Long live Tippoo Saheb".

EUROPEAN VISIT

Rammohun Roy, it is well-known, enjoyed his visit to Europe, though he could never return to his motherland as he died in Bristol on 27 September, 1833. He also greatly appreciated the warm reception accorded to him both by the Government and the people in England and in France. But it is certain, this Prophet of Indian awakening would not have liked the way people in England greeted him as "Tippop Saheb" or as the ruler of India. Tipu, the ruler of Mysore, died on 4 May, 1799 and Rammohun Roy had nothing to do with sovereignty of India or that of any Indian State.

What Rammohun Roy detested the most was ignorance. His whole life, in fact, was a struggled against ignorance. He fought tooth and nail against illiteracy, prejudice, superstition, and blindbelief. To him, most of the evils and problems, which existed in society, all over the world, had their origin in ignorance or lack of enlightenment.

Rammohun Roy had to fight against ignorance and prejudice right from the beginning of his life. Born of devout Brahmin parents at Radhanagar on 22 May, 1772, he took an early interest in the study of various religions. He also learnt Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit and English. He acquired a deep understanding of the British ideas and administration by joing the service of the East India Company and from which he retired at the age of 42. After his retirement, he settled permanently in Calcutta, and with his characteristic vigour devoted himself whole-heartedly to the enlightenment of his fellow-countrymen.

PIONEER IN JOURNALISM

A pioneer in the field of journalism, Rammohun Roy established newspapers in English, Hindi, Bengali, Persian and Urdu. He established schools and colleges and led a successful campaign against widow-burning He founded Brahmo Samaj a religious organization, with the aim of purifying Hinduism. He was clear in his religious ideas and had an admiration not only for Vedanta philosophy but also for the teachings of Jesus. He was against Trinitarianism and so powerful was his influence that he converted a powerful missionary journalist, educationist and social reformer, William Adam to Unitarianism.

On 15 November, 1830, when Rammohun Roy left Calcutta for England to represent the case of the Mughal King to the British Government, he also presented to a committee of the British Parliament his recommendations on ways to improve the Government of India, particularly the revenue and judical systems. He had absolutely practical suggestions for the improvement of the conditions of the Indian cultivators, ryots and other sections of society and presented them to the British Government.

LIBERAL ATTITUDE

He went to different parts of England and also to France and met Jeremy Bentham, Sir Robert Owen, Lant Carpenter, King William, Rebert Aspland, Duke of Cumberland, William Rathbone, James Sutherland, William Roscoe, James Buckingham and many other distinguished statesmen, scholars, parliamentarians and philosophers. He left a deep mark of his personality and his liberal attitude towards social problems of the day, and created a friendly atmosphere everywhere.

Jeremy Bentham was so much impressed by Rammohun Roy that he described him as his collaborator in the service of mankind. Rammohun Roy was indeed an extraordinary man, with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and freedom. He was an internationalist and his cosmopolitanism was not confined to politics alone. It was in fact a conviction in the concept of human fellowship as an instrument of world progress. With a unique faith in the unity of all mankind, Rammohun Roy wrote to Prince Tolleyrand, minister for foreign affairs, France, in 1832 :

> " . . . all mankind are one great family of which numerous nations and tribes existing are only various branches."

RELIGIOUS REFORMS

An advocate of international order, based on equality and freedom, Rammohun Roy gave a concrete shape to his ideas by suggesting to Prince Talleyrand an International Congress the solution of various disputes among the different nations of the world.

The greatest obstacle in the way of enlightenment in India during that time was religious intolerance and dogmatism. Rammohun Roy therefore felt the need of recovering from obscurity the exalted religious ideas of the Indian people, which centuries of neglect had overlaid with a hard caking of thoughtless customs and beliefs. Rammohun Roy tried to establish that idol-worship was an excrescence, and not an essential part of ancient Indian religious thought. His religious reforms had two-fold objective :

> To demonstrate to the believers of Christianity, etc. that the scriptures of the Hindus did not advocate polytheism, idolatry

or miracles and that their message was lofty, rational and elevating; and

to remind the Hindus that many of the rites and rituals, adopted by them at that time as religion, were not merely cruel, derogatory and inhuman but also without any scriptural sanction whatsoever.

In a letter to John Digby on 18 January, 1928, Rammohun Roy remarked :

"the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest . . . it is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort."

Rammohun Roy, thus, wanted to create, through reform in Hinduism, better social and political opportunities for his countrymen. Mrytunjay Vedalankar. Ramgopal Sharma, Kasinath Tarkapanchanan, therefore criticized Rammohun Roy for his attacks on Hinduism, particularly his condemnation of idolworship.

IDEAS OF WEST

As one of the most learned and progressive Indians of his time, Rammohun Roy felt deeply impressed by the new religious ideas of the West and he felt that the entire humanity could be benefited by the ethical ideas of the New Testament. He therefore published The Precepts of Jesus : The Guide to Peace and Happiness. For rejection of the divinity of Christ, Rammohun Roy had to face the fierce criticism of J. Marshman, William Carey, Bishop Middletone and many other leading Christian missionaries of the time in India. For defending his position and in order to propagate his religious ideas, Rammohun Roy issued a number of appels to the public and also founded in 1823, the *Brahminical Magazine*. He was critical of the Christian missionaries in India for their condemnation of Indian religious ideas and forcible conversions of Indians to Christianity. He wrote in the *Brahminical Magazine* in 1823 :

"to introduce religion by means of abuse and insult or by

affording the hope of worldly gain is inconsistent with reason and justice."

An ardent champion of women's rights, Rammohun Roy condemned widow-burning, polygamy and maltreatment of women in society. He pleaded for the spread of women's education, widow-marriage and equality of women with men. He carried his campaign against 'sati' to a successful finale by helping the British Government to overcome their doubts and diffidence about proscribing the 'horrible' custom. He described the practice of widow-burning as criminal and wrote how for the sake of money many 'Kulin' Brahmins were marrying 10 to 15 times and then maltreating the women.

Rammohun Roy was an advocate of modern liberal education. He wanted that Indians should acquire a thorough knowledge of latest scientific inventions and discoveries. He was against the old Sanskrit or Persian system of learning, because according to him they were unsuitable for the needs of the time. When the Company's government did not change its policies towards education in India and took a decision in 1823 to establish a new college for Sanskrit studies, Rammohun Roy was shocked beyond any measure. In a protest letter to the Governor-General Lord Amherst, Rammohun Roy wrote :

"the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness."

POWER OF THE PRESS

To Rammohun Roy the Press was a power. He established *Sambad Kaumudi*, *Miratul Akhbar*, *Brahminical Magazine*, *Bengal Herald*, *Bangadut*, and associated himself with a large number of newspapapers and periodicals such as the *Calcutta Journal*, the *India Gazette*, the *Bengal Hurkaru*, and the *Samachar Durpan* in order to propagate his ideas and formulate public opinion on problems facing the country during his times. He was indeed a great champion of free expression. In 1823, when through an Ordinance, the Government established censorship over the Press. Rammohun Roy sent protest memorials to the Company's Government and the British Privy Council. He remarked :

"Every good ruler, who is convinced of the imperfection of human nature . . . must be conscious of the great liability to error in managing the affairs of a vast empire, and therefore he will be anxious to afford every individual the readiest means of bringing to his notice whatever may require his interference. To secure this important object, the unrestrained liberty of publication is the only effectual means that can be employed."

Rammohun Roy aimed at establishing friendly relations between the peoples of India and that of England. He indicated to the Company's Government from time to time that though enlightened government, co-operation and goodwill, the relations between England and India could be prolonged, strengthened and improved.

Rammohun Roy pleaded that the policies of the company's government in India should be in complete conformity with the needs, feelings and aspirations of the Indian people. To his mind, betterment of the Indian people was not difficult for the Government provided it concentrated on better diffusion of knowledge and other means of enlightenment. He warned the British Government that India would prove "troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy" if well thought out policies for its development were not followed.

WIDE HORIZON

Rammohun Roy's thought and activities were not confined to India alone. He loved liberty and liberalism and had human sympathy with the people of the whole world. Suppression of liberty in Naples in 1821 hurt his sentiments and the success of the cause of liberty in Spanish colonies in America threw him into ecstacies of delight. He was happy with the French Revolution of 1830. Though he had hardly much to do with the Reform Bill of 1832, he was jubilant when it was passed by the British Parliament.

Rammohun Roy advocated the absorption of those liberal and progressive ideas by India, which were the mainstay or cornerstone of progress, power and prosperity in the most progressive countries of the world. He wanted to break the cultural isolation of the different people of the globe. He was convinced that ignorance was disasterous and the rootcause of bigotry, superstition, inequality,

injustice and intolerance. Deeply influenced by the great Persian poet-philosopher Sadi, he was absolutely convinced that the best way of serving the God was to do good to the man. In England, he made every endeavour to create in the British mind a sense of responsibility and moral obligation towards the people of India.

Majestic in his ideas, prophetic in his utterances, Rammohun Roy tried throughout his life to "weave into the tapestry of Indian life threads from the spindles of the West, without bringing about a complete alteration in the pattern upon the Indian loom". All this he could achieve because of his practical approach towards the problems, his liberalism, his vision, his insight and by

> Not clinging to an ancient saw
> Not mastered by a modern term.

Summing up, Rammohun Roy's achievements as a man of massive scholarship and an individual who through enlightenment, wanted to purify social, political and religious life of the people all over the world, James Pattle remarked in Calcutta on 5 April, 1834 :

> "If it had been the good fortune of Rammohun Roy to have lived in ancient Rome or Grecian times, I say, the historian, the poet, the painter, the sculptor, would have vied with each other in immortalizing his name."

Two months after the death of Rammohun Roy in Bristol, Dr. T. Boot, an eminent American physician, practising in London, remarked on 27 November, 1833 :

> "No one in past history or in the present time ever came before my judgement clothed in such wisdom, grace and humanity,"

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REBIRTH AND GROWTH OF CIVILIZATION IN INDIA AND RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY

ASHOKE CHATTERJEE

Creative and constructive work by persons who have knowledge, clear vision of ultimate objectives and ability to attract ardent followers, has always been a basic and essential feature of human progress. Vastly learned and talented men have come and gone without leaving any mark on the face of time, for the reason that they had no spiritual or moral objectives to achieve. They did not try to mould human conduct and behaviour into newer and more perfect shapes. They were not path-finders nor did they strive to effect any fundamental changes in the various fields of life which brought men closer to their ideals of progress and civilization. The creative and constructive workers, on the other hand, look at their human and social environment with a deep analytical purposefulness which aims at the discovery of flaws and defects in individual and social character requiring removal and change. Their desire is to establish a better and cleaner outlook in the people, to remove superstition and reform decadent religious and social institutions. They try to bring light where there was darkness before, joy in place of suffering and allow man's mind and spirit to rule the grossness of bodily existence. These are the men out of whose ranks come the Prophets and reformers, the great Political leaders and the revolutionary thinkers who change established ideas and replace them by thoughts of greater potency which remodel human life and civilization.

There are many aspects of life in which spirituality and ethical reactions are not so actively manifested as are matters intellectual or those that have to do with human behaviour and culture. Great men have been born who made a profound study of history, literature, science, art or music; but their work influenced the mind of man without stirring up the spiritual depths of his soul wherein rested the seed of his greater humanity. Thus Herodotus, Thucydides, Pliny or Tacitus trained up the human mind by the study of history without stimulating the growth of soul force in man. Horace, Quintilian, Kalidas and Shakespeare in literature; Pythagoras, Nagarjuna and Galileo in science or Giotto, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci in art, could also illuminate man's mind without bringing him closer to God or tuning his Soul to ring in harmony with the External and the Infinite. There are spiritual urges which may go unfulfilled inspite of great intellectual attainments. Spiritual starvation may reduce human beings to a condition where their knowledge of science or economics will serve no purpose and their conduct and behaviour will relegate them to the lowest stratum of civilisation. Thus, inspite of their great and intensive knowledge of science, economics, art, medicine and music, the Storm Troopers of Nazi Germany violated most of the cherished principles of human conduct in an utterly abandoned manner. Many other nation's have from time to time broken away from their spiritual and ethical moorings while maintaining their intellectual attainments to the fullest degree. As a matter of fact knowledge of science and moral reactions in human relations appear to be inversely related. Many people think that humanity will destroy itself when scientific progress reaches its apex. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that spiritual and moral poverty cannot be cured by scientific education alone or by the exclusive study of history, economics or medicine. People who are considered to be ignorant sometimes turn out to be powerful agents in the moral and religious fields. They may not know anything about law or engineering but they can bring peace and happiness to suffering humanity by devotion and direct communion with God.

India has been very lucky in having many religious leaders in all periods of her history. Those who came before the historical times were the expounders of the Vedas and the Post Vedic texts. The Jain Tirthankars and Goutama the Buddha came after them. During the middle ages, after Sankaracharya, we had Chaitanya,

Nanak, Kabir, Dadu and many other Saints. The dawn of the modern age saw the advent of Rammohun Roy who was a most remarkable religious reformer insofar as he was a vastly learned man, well versed in law, court practice, financial work, pamphleteering, journalism, debating and carrying on scholastic controversies. He was a master of many languages and he wrote monographs in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, English, Bengali and Hindi. He also knew Hebrew, Greek and Latin as well as Pali, Maghadi, Urdu and French. When he was about 16 years old he wrote a pamphlet in Arabic in support of monotheism. This caused him trouble with his father, who was an orthodox Brahmin of the idolatrous and polytheistic *Sanatan* type. Rammohun left home and wandered over North India eventually reaching Lhasa in Tibet. In this far away land, which he reached after traversing the dangerous snow bound passes of the Himalayas, he came in touch with the learned Lamas who expounded Mahayana Buddhism to him. Being a rationalist *Par excellence* Rammohun never accepted anything as a self-established Truth. He argued with the Lamas and was hated by them for his sacreligious doubts. His life was at times in grave danger and he might not have returned to India alive, had not the ladies of the Lama families given him protection and arranged for his flight from Lhasa. Rammohun had always been highly respectful to women and the Tibetan *grade dames* found in him a champion of feminism whom they decided to support and protect at any cost.

When Rammohun Roy was about twenty years old his father called him back to the parental home and according to Rammohun's own description of the incidents of his early life, his contact with Europeans began about this time. He was before this highly antagonistic to the Europeans who had usurped political power in India. He now studied their laws, codes of conduct and the principles they upheld in the management of the state. He found them more intelligent, stable in outlook and progressive, and he thought their connection, though undesirable on account of being associated with foreign domination, could be of advantage to Indians, whose position in the social and political fields was degraded and helpless. He came to the conclusion, therefore, that Europeans could give Indians valuable aid and assistance in matters of social and political advancement and progress. Rammohun Roy also came to the conclusion that what India needed first of all were

proper education, social reform and adherence to reason and truth in the field of religious thought. He studied the ancient *Shastric* texts and found that Hinduism as practised by the priests of religion was far removed from the teachings of the ancient *Rishis.* Social manners and customs were vicious and degenerate and its most outrageous example was the burning of widows alive on the funeral pyres of their deceased husbands. There were other customs too like offering female infants to the river goddess, infant marriage, polygamy and so forth, which required to be put a stop to Rammohun Roy's criticism of the manners and customs followed by the Hindus, with Brahminic Sanction, brought him into great disfavour of Brahmins and their blind followers. His father was a believer in these practices and Rammohun found his own family members were against him insofar as he was against idolatry, polytheism, *suttee,* child marriage, polygamy, repression of women and other evil practices. He had very few friends left and according to his own statement, he had only two or three Scotchmen who stuck to him as friends. He said he did not oppose the Brahminic religion but only its misconstrued aberrations indulged in by ignorant persons and Brahmin priests who preferred to keep up established practices rather than take the trouble to revive the true *Shastric* institutions in their pure and unspoilt form. He tried to explain to the priests that their idolatry was quite contrary to what their ancestors practised. The holy books that they often quoted from were also against idolatry. But when that was mentioned to the priests they reacted in a manner which was not favourably responsive nor led to any recognition of Vedic and Vedantic truths. Rammohun Roy could not do much about this obstreperous attitude of the learned men among the Hindus until and unless he could organise enlightened support from his own countrymen. He proceeded to organise this and eventually succeeded in creating an atmosphere in which *Suttee* was abolished by law and so also was infanticide stopped. Women's education too began during his life time but it took long years before widow remarriage was introduced in Hindu society. Child marriage continued even after that and Polygamy was made illegal more than a century after his death. Rammohun Roy made the women folk of his own family recite the *Gayatri Mantrasm* inspite of the established rules of society which made it a forbidden thing for women to recite or even listen to the *Gayatri.* The orthodox advocates of repression of women used to do propaganda

against emancipation of the members of the weaker sex by making false accusations against them. Women were by nature unintelligent, they said, and they were unstable mentally, unreliable and incapable of true loyalties and spiritual realisations. "When did you hold any intelligence tests for women," asked Rammohun Roy, "that you found them lacking in intelligence ? You have never educated them, then how could you say they are not endowed with the capacity to learn ? They are unstable in character, you say. But they face death boldly and with a steadfastness which is totally impossible for men who tremble at the mere mention of death. If you say they are untrustworthy then count the numbers of traitors among men and also count the women who have betrayed men. Betrayed women will out number men who have suffered betrayal by women at the ratio 10 : 1. Women have only one great fault. It is their simple faith in men." The decriers of women were guilty of announcing the results of their enquiry relating to the fitness of women to have a higher status in society without actually making any enquiries. This proved their own intellectual dishonesty and poverty. The fact that one man was allowed to marry several wives and that men who were very old marry young girls were social arrangements for turning out widows in large numbers. And widows could attain a goddesslike status only by being burnt alive with their deceased husbands. The same women, however, had no status in society while they lived.

In 1811, Rammohun's elder brother Jagamohun died. His wife Alokmani was burnt to death on Jagamohun's funeral pyre. Rammohun looked upon this lady with great respect. He took a vow that he would not rest until he got this murderous ritual abolished. He had to get the British officials to support him before this could be achieved. Many British officials said nothing when they saw women being burnt alive for their policy was one of non-interference with the religious practices of the people. But Rammohun intensified his propaganda against *Suttee* while he carried on his work of social and educational reform along with his criticism of religious beliefs and observances.

Lord Amherst was in favour of abolishing *Suttee* but he could not pick up enough courage to put a stop to it by law. He, however, made some stringent rules which made the burning of widows not so very gainful for those who indulged in such burnings. His rules were : (1) that a widow could not be burnt or killed in any

manner other than by burning on the pyre of her dead husband, (2) the widow had to personally go to a Magistrate and take his permission to be burnt as a *Suttee*, (3) no one helping in the burning of widows would get a job under Government, and (4) all properties belonging to the husband of a *Suttee* would vest in Government and would not be inherited by other persons.

Rammohun Roy had proved by reference to the *Shastras* that the burning of the widows had no supporting provisions in the holy books. The best thing a widow could do was to live a pure and ascetic life after the death of the husband. The *Shastras* did not enjoin immolation along with the deceased husband. Lord William Bentinck eventually made a law prohibiting the institution of *Suttee*. But this was done in the face of strong opposition from the orthodox community and many members of the British community too. Even after the law was passed the opposition continued their agitation for getting it rescinded by the British Parliament. Rammohun Roy was in England when this appeal was considered and was instrumental in its rejection.

Just as Raja Rammohun Roy's opinions relating to idolatry, polytheism, suppression of women, *Suttee*, child marriage, infenticide and other evil practices antagonised orthodox Hindus of the old school who believed in carrying on the traditions of their forefathers without questioning their validity as ascertained by reference to the Tenets of Hinduism recorded in the sacred books whose authority and infallibility the Hindus did not deny : Rammohun Roy's personality and his knowledge of the *Shastric* texts attracted large number of free thinking intellectuals of whom there were quite a few at that time among Indians as well as among the British. Rammohun Roy's criticism of Christian Trinitarianism and his advocacy of Unitarian thought ruffled the smooth surface of Christian self-righteousness. Some Europeans took up the pen against Rammohun Roy and the pamphlets issued by the latter eventually silenced the orthodox Christians. Rammohun's "Percepts of Jessus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness, his three booklets entitled "Appeal to the Christian Public" and other publications proved that Christian Trinitarianism was very similar to Hindu polytheism. Reverend William Adam of the Srirampur Baptist Mission renounced his faith in trinitarianism and took up Unitarianism as his creed. This enraged all missionaries like William Carry and Joshua Marshman who resented Rammohun Roy's

remarks about Christianity and Christian miracles as expounded by the priests of that religion. Raja Rammohun Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Radanath Roy formed a Unitarian Committee in order to boost the morale of William Adam. Those who went and joined the Unitarian Church Service were criticised by the public for their deviation from the dictates of Hinduism. In 1827, a booklet was published in the name of Chandrashekhar Dev entitled, "The Answer of a Hindu to the question : why do you frequent a unitarian place of workship instead of numerously attended established churches :" This was Rammohun's answer to his critics and he stated that he supported unitarianism for the reason that it upheld monotheism which was basically and truly, also the principle of Christianity and of Vedic Hinduism.

Raja Rammohun Roy had set up the Atmiya Sabha in 1816. Its objective was the study of religion, the search of truth and the free discussion of matters religious. Many people attended the sittings of the Atmiya Sabha and its changed its meeting centres a number of times. It was at Biharilal Chowbay's house in Burrabazar that Rammohun's famous discourse with Subrahmanya Shastri relating to idolatry was arranged. It was a remarkable intellectual contest, reminiscent of the old time battles of opinion in which the great law-givers like Shankaracharya participated. Subrahmanya Shastri was for idolatry and Rammohun against. After a prolonged discussion and numerous citations and counter-citations Subrahmanya Shastri eventually admitted that the worship of the Abstract creative spirit Brahma was essentially the best form of workship of God.

The Atmiya Sabha later changed to Brahma Sabha or the Brahmo Samaj. Brahmo Samaj was named and organised in 1828. This was done in a rented house, but in 1830 on the 11th of Magh (23rd January) a piece of land was purchased in Chitpur Road to building a house for the Brahmo Samaj. The Trustees of this property were Baikunthanath Roy, Radhaprasad Roy and Ramanath Tagore. The Board of Trustees receized the property from Dwarkanath Tagore, Kalinath Roy, Prasanarkumar Tagore, Ramchandra Vidyabagish and Rammohun Roy. 500 persons were present when the Brahma Samaj occupied its new premises. There were many Brahmins who received money gifts. Before the establishment of the Brahmo Samaj, Rammohun Roy had started a

Vedanta College in which learned Sanskrit scholars expounded Hindu monotheism to some youngmen. The opponents of Rammohun Roy also tried to set up a counter-organisation for defeating Rammohun Roy's efforts at reform. Their Dharma Sabha announced that all Hindus who did not observe the practices of the established community should be expelled from Hindu society. They had their own journal and their attacks were usually based on vituperation directed against Raja Rammohun Roy. In the beginning the reactionary counter moves by those who wanted to keep up the unregenerate customs and practices of the Hindus, succeeded to a great extent and Rammohun was isolated to a degree. But as time passed reforms began to creep in and Hindu society accepted almost all the reforms that Rammohun Roy advocated a hundred and fifty years ago. The position of women particularly improved vastly and their progress had been mainly set in motion by the work that Raja Rammohun Roy had done during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. There are even today some persons who try to prove that Raja Rammohun Roy's contributions to the modernisation of India were not as important as is claimed by his admirers. They forget that Rammohun Roy was the first high caste Brahmin of an established position in Hindu society who took up the cause of Western Scientific education in India and pointed out to his own conntrymen how the degenerate practices followed by them made their image low, barbarous and uncivilised to the world at large, Europeans and other non-Indians might have tried to show up these defects to Hindu Society but that would not have had the same effect as would result if an Indian of good position made efforts at reforming his own countrymen. And in the case of Raja Rammohun Roy one had to admit that at that particular period of time there were precious few persons in Europe or India who could claim as much erudition, position in Court, legal acumen and knowledge of Hindu *Shastras*, the Bible and Islamic texts as one found in the Raja. The Raja was a staunch believer in rationality; but not at the cost of spiritual and moral preferences. In those days, when the French Revolution had shaken people's faith in religion and the revolutionaries of France worshipped *La Raison* in place of God, Raja Rammohun Roy's faith in God inspite of his great intellectual attainments stands out as a fully manifest glorification of the Infinite and Eternal values. India has

always been a land of faith and belief in the spiritual facts of existence. Gross materialism could never move the Indian masses to any enthusiastic responses to the calls of those who wanted them to move towards new objectives. Destructive criticism of religion which offered no substitutes as spiritual targets, could never help any work of reformation. The successors of Raja Rammohun Roy were all men who pointed out spiritual destinations to their followers. Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, to name only some later Indian leaders of men, were all persons who presented spiritual and moral objectives to Indians. Raja Rammohun Roy had ample knowledge of materialism and the philosophical principles of Hedonism, Epicurianism and Stoicism but he never faltered when he had to choose a path, and faith in the supreme spirit of creation was the guiding light of his life. He knew Jeremy Bentham, Robert Owen and J.S. Mill. These great European thinkers compared the Raja to Plato, Aristotle and Socrates and, nevertheless, quite fully appreciated his spiritual preferences. Raja Rammohun Roy recognised social, political and economic facts as the wheels of life, but he knew that God, whose abstract conception was found in Brahma, provided the moving force which turned the wheels. Rammohun Roy had realised early in life that India had suffered subjection to foreigners, utter poverty and social degradation due to ignorance, disorganisation and attachment to false ideals which had to be removed in order to set India properly on the path of progress. The arrival of Europeans in India made it easy for Indians to acquire Western education and to replace their false social standards by use of the measuring rod which showed them the unethical dimensions of their manners and customs. Rammohun Roy was a great ahmirer of ancient Indian culture and civilisation and he translated into Bengali and English many Vedic and Vedantic Texts in order to make present day Indians better realise glory of the civilisation that they had allowed to become almost lifeless by suffocating malpractices. Women, who constituted half the nation were in an abject condition in those days. Rammohun Roy dreamt of women coming back to the elevated position they occupied in the days of Maitreyi, Gargi and Lilavati, and women did move forward since his time and achieved great progress to make their

presence felt in the spheres of politics, education, literature, science and the arts. They were no longer subjected to inhuman torture and oppression and treated as the bond slaves of their male relations. The credit for women's emancipation in India goes mainly to Raja Rammohun Roy.

British overlordship was highly undesirable thought the Raja in earlier days; but as he came to be better acquainted with British law, political, educational and social institutions he began to see possibilities of gain to Indians through closer association with the British. He certainly wanted Western type of education as against the classical Sanskrit variety; for the reason that scientific education made the persons so educated modern in outlook, practical in reactions and progressive in their everyday life. Raja Rammohun Roy said in a letter he addressed to Lord Amherst about Governmental aid to educational institutions for the instruction of Indians, that he thought the classical system of education was the easiest way of keeping the nation in the darkness of ignorance relating to progress and civilisation in the modern world, which depended more and more on science for reaching the targets in various spheres of life. Indians had to learn English and study the sciences in order to be able to meet the challenge of modern life. Sanskrit education was available in many places everywhere in India. The Government should, therefore, only help to arrange for scientific education through the medium of English. Raja Rammohun Roy was very well-versed in Sanskrit and Arabic; but he felt a great urge to learn English when he was over thirty years old. He was soon fully able to read write and speak English. He also found that education in order to be a weapon of progress had to include the study of Mathematics, the Natural Sciences, Chemistry, Physiology and other Sciences, the knowledge of which contributed to human well-being. Rammohnn in his letter to Lord Amherst had also suggested that the money that the Government would spend for education should be used for bringing some well educated British tutors to India. His suggestions were, however, not accepted by the Government. He did not give up his quest for Western education on account of this refusal. He made other connections and it was his effort and enterprise that initiated developments leading to the founding of the Hindu College. But the opponents of Rammohun Roy wanted his name to be kept out of the list of persons organising the Hindu College. Rammohun Roy

readily agreed to withdraw his name as he only wanted to arrange for English education and had no desire to parade his own association with organisations propagating the same. In 1817, Rammohun Roy established an institution for teaching English and other subjects at Suripara in Calcutta. That was the first non-govermental English school. He also started English classes in his house at Upper Circular Road. In 1822, the Anglo-Hindu School was established near Hedua Tank. This was a free school. Among those who studied at this school were Debendranath Tagore, Nripendranath Tagore, Kshetramohum Chatterjee, Mahesh Chandra Banerjee and Shyamacharan De. In 1830, Rev. Alexander Duff came to India as the representative of the Church of Scotland. He started a school with the active assistance of Raja Rammohun Roy.

All these go to show how intensely he felt about the necessity for Western Education. He was a great Sanskrit Scholar and he did his best to acquaint his countrymen with the sacred books of the Hindus. But he knew that English education was essential for national progress. He did not subscribe to the views of Macaulay and De Rozio who did not think there was anything to learn in Hindu Culture and Civilisation but that all things worth learning were found in the storehouse of Western Civilisation. His viewpoint was positive insofar as he extolled the value of scientific studies in the field of nation-building. When it came to criticism of idolatry or establishing monotheism in its rightful place he quoted unstintingly from Sanskrit texts. His eagerness to arouse proper appreciation and understanding of Vedic and Vedantic Philosophy in his own countrymen urged him to translate some of the ancient texts into Bengali. This led to the development of Bengali prose in a manner which was of great significance in the evolution of modern literary style and form in the Bengali language. Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore and many other writers contributed creatively in this work of development, but the foundation was laid by Raja Rammohun Roy. He also wrote a grammar of the Bengali language which helped Europeans to learn the language correctly.

Those who had written Bengali books in prose before Rammohun Roy usually wrote text books for learners. Rammohun Roy raised the intellectual level of Bengali prose by writing his *Vedanta Grantha* in 1815 and *Vedantasara* thereafter; this was followed by *Isopanishad* and some pamphlets on the burning of

widows and other subjects. Altogether he wrote Bengali versions of five *Upanishads*, two books dealing with Vedantic subjects, one book explaining the true meaning of *Gayatri* and several dissertations based on his arguments with various Pandits. He also composed some songs and prayers for the Brahmo Samaj. There were other books too. His Bengali prose was pure Bengali. It was not stiffly Sanskritic nor a Bengali rendering of his thoughts in English or Persian. His Bengali prose is vital and mobile in expression and one can easily see how it helped the development of modern Bengali through Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Bankim Chandra and Rabindranath. His deep knowledge of classical texts on philosophical and spiritual subjects and his prolonged efforts to popularise these books by translating their profound and abstruse contents into simple Bengali prose would appear to contradict his preference for English education and his criticism of the classical *Toulik* system of imparting knowledge to the students. It is in fact no contradiction, for the study of Sanskrit and the sacred books did not prepare the students for their struggle for existence in modern times. They had to learn science and the useful arts in order to be progressive in the competitive world of today. For their spiritual development and the growth of a correct religious outlook they had to learn and understand the true meaning of Vedic and Vedantic literature. Raja Rammohun Roy had himself mastered classical Sanskrit, Arabic, Hebrew, Latin and Greek. He had also a very good knowledge of Persian, English, Bengali, Hindi and French. His knowledge of Law, International Politics, Estate Management and Court Procedure was perfect. There was, therfore, nothing illogical in his desire to run the ordinary schools of the country for Western type of scientific education and to propagate, at the same time, the study of Hindu Philosophy and the scholastic interpretations of religious texts for those who aimed at spiritual realisations and correct abstract conceptions. Classical education, however, denied to men that fuller and correct knowledge of the material needs of life which was essential for national progress. Scientific education filled that gap which was left unprovided for by the classical teachers of grammar and philosophy.

The Eighteenth century was predominantly the arena in which civilisations and cultural forces fought their battles for self-assertion. Two great political revolutions, the American War of Independence and the French Revolution shook the world of established

rights; and royal prerogatives vanished along with their appendages in the shape of privileges of birth or station. In India, three civilisations struggled for supremacy. The Hindu traditions, often twisted out of shape, depended on their antiquity to establish the right of continued existence. The Islamic bigotry deprived of the might that emanated from royal support, fought a losing battle; but hung on grimly by certain cultural strings which were strong by reason of their appeal to man's imagination. Western civilisation had might to establish its right. Muslim and Hindu princes were no match for the British and French Generals and diplomatic tricksters and the latter gained ground as the former gave way. Raja Rammohun Roy found the seeds of true freedom in Western Science and Social Philosophy. The great scientists of the West unlocked the gates of knowledge and held them wide upon to make everyting clearly visible that was obscure and steeped in gloom before. Western thinkers released the human mind from its shackles of fanaticism or blissful acquiescence with the dictates of the established order. Reason bagan to function freely and everyone asked questions now before carrying out orders. Rammohun found it useful to question the validity of Government orders and arrangements and he also engaged in dialectical disputes and discussions with learned Pandits to establish truth in the abstract and abstruse spheres of knowledge. His letters to various persons of importance and his appeals to Government show how he always chose the path of reason to place his claims on a firm footing. His discourses with Bhattacharya, a Pandit employed by the Srirampur Mission; Goswami and Subrahmanya Shastri show his amazing capacity for logical analysis and his polemical skill. Like Shankaracharya he was ever undefeated in argument and his intensive knowledge of everything that came up for discussion stood him in good stead time and again. But insofar as his faith in the abstract conception of God or Brahma was concerned he suffered no doubts and was absolutely firm in his faith in *Brahmopasana* or worship of God. The Vedas, the Upanishads, the religious precepts of the Buddhists, the Jains, the Islamic mystics and the Christians provided him with ample scope to exercise his powers of logical thought and reasoning. He found nothing in the thoughts of Western rationalists to shake his faith in God and carried on his exhortations of scientific education and study of English side by side, with his efforts to popularise the study of the source books in Sanskrit of ancient

Indian metaphysical thought and theology. There were in those days some extreme rationalists, even confirmed atheists, in Bengal. They specialised in disbelief and destructive criticism. They discovered nothing in a new intellectual vista that could replace what they were giving up and fill the spiritual vacuum that pervaded their soul. Rammohun offered them Brahmavidya and many accepted it wholeheartedly. Keshub Chandra Sen said that basically Raja Rammohun Roy believed in the abstract conception of God who was shapeless, without a material body and was eternal and infinite. He found these ideas in the Vedic and post-Vedic religious texts and he wanted the Hindus to give up their polytheistic image worship and to induce them to go back to the ancient monotheistic faith in a great and abstract force that was Brahma or God. Surendranath Banerjee compared Raja Rammohun Roy to Sri Chaitanva who was the product of the impact that Islam made on Indian thought and belief. Raja Rammohun Roy was the product of the impact of Western civilisation on Hindu intellectualism and spiritual outlook. The famous Western scholar Max Muller said that he considered Raja Rammohun Roy as a great man of no mean dimensions. He was great because he was selfless, honest and fearless. Rammohun's attachment to monotheism and his rejection of image worship in the face of strong opposition of most of his friends, acquaintances and relations; and his prolonged campaign against the system of *Suttee* prove his selflessness, honesty and courage. Prof. Sylvain Levy said in the course of an address given to the Paris University that India produced Kabir, Nanak and Chaitanya to simulate a religious awakening and a Shivaji to rouse national consciousness. Raja Rammohun Roy came to give all this a composite material shape. He is, therefore, great to the Indian public and it also a superman before humanity at large. He took the best out of all civilisations and synthesized the same with his own traditions. He did not accept these traditions unquestioningly and with a blind disregard for reason and truth. He rejected all that he considered to be unhealthy growths which had developed due to the prevalence of diseased conditions. Reverend C. F. Andrews was of the opinion that Raja Rammohun Roy had no equal in modern India. He had a personality which reached to the furthest limits of spiritually and intellectual understanding. Rammohun had shown us the direction in which we have to go in order to reach our idealistic objectives.

In ancient times religion pervaded life and the saints who expounded religion did not have to rouse the social consciousness to realise other facts of existence which were coextensive with religion. When Raja Rammohun Roy came to teach his fellowmen the true value of individual and social reactions to man's intellectual, moral and spiritual urges; he found religion alone did not cover the field of life. Education, equality at law, emancipation of women, prevention of child marriage and polygamy, freedom of the press, synthesis of religious thought, the establishment of human rights and many other problems stared him in the face. When he was 16 years old he thought monotheism was the outstanding problem which needed solution. But, with the passing of time other problems cropped up and he had to think of means which would enable him to change the face of Indian society by giving a new shape to almost all its important features. His letter to Lord Amherst relating to introduction of scientific English education, his publication of *Sambad Kaumudi* and *Mirat-Ul-Akhbar* and opposition to the Press Censorship imposed by the Government, go to show how his activities were not restricted to religious and social reform only. His memorandum to the Supreme Court for upholding the ideal of a free Press has been called the Areopagitica of Indian History by his biographer Miss Collet. When Raja Rammohun Roy and his associates made a further appeal to the King Emperor they pointed out to His Majesty that "a Free Press has never yet caused a revolution in any part of the world, because, while men can easily represent the grievances arising from the conduct of the local authorities to the supreme government, and thus get them redressed, grounds of discontent that excite revolution are removed; whereas where no freedom of Press existed and grievances consequently remained unrepresented and unredressed, innumerable revolutions have taken place in all parts of the globe. or if prevented by the armed forces of the government, the people continued ready for insurrection."

Rammohum Roy appears to many as a great religious and social reformer but he is no less important as an educationist, a journalist, a literary man, a linguist or a dialectician. We would remind all students of social and cultural history that Raja Rammohun Roy was a pioneer in propagating correct ideas of political freedom, establishment of international amity and fellowship and development of the ideals of human rights.

He expounded in his writing advanced ideas of economics, international trade and the basic rights of self-government. He suggested the abolition of the rigours of the caste system, early marriage and the introduction of widow remarriage and many other social, legal political, and institutional reforms. Had he lived longer and been able to carry out the reforms he supported, we might have seen the last of untouchability long before Gandhiji arrived on the scene. The Raja also suggested tenancy reforms of a very significant variety. His suggestion that the British officials and trades people should settle down in India was made because he found these people were taking away many crores of rupees annually from India to Britain. His suggestion for settling some British retired officials and traders in India was a way of preventing flight of wealth and capital from India. The Raja strongly objected to the discrimination that existed in the Jury system wherein it was the rule that Christian Jury (European, Indian or mixed) could try Hindus or Muslims; but a Hindu or Muslim Jury was not permitted to try Europeans or Indian Christians. Rammohun Roy organised the sending of a public application for abolishing this system to the British Parliament. Raja Rammohun Roy was a man who was totally free from prejudices. He looked upon all Indians with an impartial eye. For that matter he had great sympathy for all people, of whatever race, creed or complexion, who struggled for freedom. The Irish, the Spanish Americans or the Neapolitans—all drew his wholehearted sympathy towards them, and one may easily say that Raja Rammohun Roy was the first universal man in modern times. He was the precursor of all those who thought rationally, uncompromisingly and with a fearless disregard of disadvantageous consequences.

The Raja was friendly to the British Officials in India, but he always opposed their attempts at curbing the freedom of Indians in various fields of publie life. We have already given some examples of such activities of Raja Rammohun Roy. Another very important instance is found in the appointment of Raja Rammohun Roy by the Moghul Emperor of Delhi as his emissary. The Raja was raised to the rank of a Raja by the Emperor and was authorised by him to go to England and represent his case for increased allowances to the King of England. When the Raja informed the Viceroy about this appointment and of his intention to go to England for this purpose, the English Government of India informed him that they neither accepted his new rank of Raja nor did

they admit his appointment as the official representative of the Moghul Emperor of Delhi. If the Raja went to England he would go only as private person. The Raja ignored this rebuff and went to England. He was received there by the British public and parliament as an ambassador of India and was shown every respect that an ambassador may expect to be shown.

Raja Rammohun Roy's standing *vis-a-vis* the British, the British rulers of India, *viz* : the East India Company, the British parliament and the King-in-Council were of great importance no doubt; but one must not lose sight of Rammohun's intellectual, cultural and moral eminence which created for him a unique position in England and France. He was the most effectively outstanding man in India during the first half of the Nineteenth century, and, though he had more, detractors than supporters in India, the constructive force of his activities attached to him, inevitably, the tangible signs of renown as a path-finder in the sphere of nation. building. Miss Sophia Dobson Collet, whose biography of Raja Rammohun Roy is accepted as the most dependable and authoritative record of the life and work of the great reformer says :

> "Rammohun stands in history as the living bridge over which India marches from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future. He was the arch which spanned the gulf that yawned between ancient caste and modern humanity, between superstition and science, between despotism and democracy, between immobile custom and a conservative progress, between . . . polytheism and. . . theism. He was the mediator of his people, harmonising in his own person, often by means of his own solitary sufferings, the conflicting tendencies of immemorial tradition and an inevitable enlightenment. "(Quoted by Ramananda Chatterjee in his book Rammohun Roy and Modern India.")

Brajendranath Seal, the master philosopher of modern India has said about Raja Rammohun Roy in his book "Rammohun the Universal Man" : ". . . the history of Indian civilisation taught him many other things of fundamental importance, e.g., in the sphere of State policy, an original separation between the legislative and the executive functions; in the sphere of jurisprudence, the origin of law in custom and *achara* as co-ordinated with the sovereign's

command, and, often, as ratified *ex post facto* by such command and sanction; and in sphere of juridical as well as revenue administration, the pivotal character of the village and its *panchayat* and of the ryot's tenure and ownership of land. But he gave a modern meaning and purpose to these ancient and mediaeval elements of Indian polity. He went to link them up with Representative Government, trial by jury, and freedom of the press and he corrected and completed the Hindu's personal law of marriage, inheritance, religious worship, women's status, *stri-dhana* and *varnasrama-dharma* by introducing the most liberal principles of justice and equity, for which he found sanction also in the old codes, thus working out a synthesis between Eastern and Western social values and postulates, against the common background of Universal Humanity."

Rammohun Roy was thus a master of the details of the thoughts and actions that went to construe life and he made a comprehensive synthesis of theory and practice with great perfection. Dr. Seal said further :

> "But it was not only the jurisprudence of the new polity, it was also the modern scientific civilization of the west, that he wanted to plant on Asiatic soil; and accordingly, he helped to establish public education in India on the basis of real and useful knowledge more particularly of science and the application of science to industry. Similarly, he avoided the fallacy of the physiocratic economists in pitting agriculture against manufacture; he would preserve the ryatwari agrarian and rural basis of the Indian civilisation, while he would plant on this soil modern scientific industry to improve the standard of living, and therewith the health and physique of the Indian people. . .

And in the end there came to this prophet of Humanity on his death bed the vision of a free, puissant and enlightend India, the civilizer and enlightener of Asiatic nationalities, a golden link between the Far East and the Far West, a vision as emblematic of the past, as it was prophetic of the future history of Humanity."

26

INDIAN RENAISSANCE AND RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY

HIREN MUKHERJEE*

I

A percept endowment by a distinguished citizen, the late Shri P.K. Shiralkar, who was active as patriot and philanthropist, enables me to participate in the performance of a national duty, that of remembering the man whom several generations of our educated *elite* have called the "Father of Modern India", Rammohun Roy. 'Let us praise our famous men,' as the scriptures of every people enjoin, and Rammohun Roy deserves remembrance and praise no less than any of our great forbears. It is, in our parlance, a pious obligation, all the more incumbent because two hundred years have rolled by since Rammohun Roy was born.

One should not make glib generalisations, especially in Poona where accurate historical scholarship is so esteemed and practised, but it may be that in our country historical judgments are often somewhat volatile, that our approach towards heroes—whether *devatas* or *gurus* or lesser humans—is almost invariably too worshipful, that our biographies, in solar as we have them, are as a rule essays in exaggerated adulation. In regard to Rammohun Roy, a new trend has made its appearance lately. Dr. R.C. Majumdar,

*A Series of Lectures delivered by the learned author at the University of Poona in 1975.

who might perhaps be termed the *doyen* of living Indian historians, has found himself impelled for what must seem to him good reason to attempt a very critical evaluation, even to the point of what might appear painfully akin to a certain uncalled for denigration. More significantly, and with greater cogency, participants in a symposium on Rammohun, held a few months ago in the Jawaharlal Nehru Museum at New Delhi, have tried to shun the conventional approach and to reach truly balanced judgements.[1] It is good, indeed, that in this bi-centenary year Indian scholarship is, at least to some extent, seriously engaged in weeding out "inconsequential apocrypha tending to obscure rather than illuminate a life of rich and unique achievement"[2] which, indeed, was the life of Rammohun Roy.

One finds evidence of our peculiar predicament in the fact that there is no agreement yet among scholars even over the year of birth of Rammohun Roy. It is a trifle ironic that before deciding a celebration of the bi-centenary, Government had to appoint a committee of experts to make sure of the date and the committee, after much contentious debate, could only decide by its chairman's casting vote that 1772 rather than 1774 appears on balance of evidence to be the great man's year of birth. Here in this learned city, where you have the far-famed *Itihasa-Sangshodhak-Mandali*, this casting-vote determination of a merely 200-year-old issue must appear especially intriguing. How one hopes that our age-long allergy towards dates and documents and other objective data about life can at least be overcome and we are in a position to ascertain our past to the extent passible ! It is false philosophy which thinks of the past as dead and gone—as if "after life's fitful fever it sleeps well"—for the past lives on in the present and to the extent of its survival value affects the future. Indian scholarship owes it not only to itself but also to future generations to make sure, so far as possible, about the life and work of Rammohun Roy, for on any computation it has been a remarkable stimulus for some of the more positive and creative elements in India's social and cultural development during the last two hundred years.

Rammohun Roy occupies by common consent, an exalted place in what in our rhetorical mood (which I fear is frequent), we call our national pantheon. Perfunctory attention may have been given to the real facts of his career and achievement, but there has been no end to panegyrics round his name. Great men, not usually given to

ardent ejaculation about men and things, have sincerely felt like waxing eloquent about him. Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar and Mahadev Govind Rande, Rabindranath Tagore and Brajendranath Seal, and so many others who need not be named have looked on him as the authentic 'father figure' of modern India. Brajendranath Seal who was one of our most eminent encyclopaedists has ranked him with seminal world figures like Bacon and Voltaire, and has even gone further ahead by sonorously describing him as "a precursor, an archetype, a prophet of coming humanity." Except to the very young in our country today who are, largely and with perhaps good reason, iconoclasts more than ready to drag the country's 'heroes' down from their pedestal, successive generations of Indian intellectuals, irrespective of ideological and other affiliations, have sworn by Rammohun as the progenitor of vital contemporary trends. In his somewhat sweeping 'survey of Indian history', the late K.M. Panikkar, adept as he was in the tools of historical analysis, did not even hesitate to see and proclaim a sort of parallelism in reverse between Vasco de Gama's arrival in India (1498) and Rammohun Roy's journey to Britain (1830) as landmarks in Indo-European relationships.

Hegel said somewhere that the condemnation which a great man lays upon the world is to force it to explain him. No longer, is it satisfying for us in India to apply some flattering function to our bruised soul, as we did in the days before we were free, by shouting from the housetops that Rammohun has been "a peak in the panorama of modern culture and civilization." Critical rather than pious estimation of his role is now called for. Even today, however, there is no definitive biography of one usually regarded the first modern man in India. R.C. Majumdar has put it on record that almost every single fact in regard to Rammohun's early life in the centenary biography (1933) is doubtful.[3] Rammohun's memory requires neither hymns of adulation nor of attack but what he asked for above all during his lifetime, namely, "justice." Mary Carpenter and Sophia Dobson Collet deserve more than gratitude from India for their labour of love in piecing together facts (and also, regrettably, some fiction) about the great man's life. The work of the late Brajendranath Banerjee, who was best qualified to write the definitive biography but did not unhappily live to complete it, should be respectfully remembered. It is a pity that a thoughtful publicist, Iqbal Singh, essayed to sift ?

"the facts and fanciful embroideries" in order to make out an "objective chronicle," but for some reason or other, could not proceed beyond the first, and a very promising, volume. Let alone such extremely doubtful reports, which zealously persist, about Rammohun's early travels in Tibet and other hazardous peregrinations, even a trained and by no means credulous scholar like Panikkar makes a highly intriguing, if undocumented, reference in his "Asia and Western Dominance," to Rammohun having corresponded with the French philosopher Condorcet. This is fairly incredible because Condorcet, caught up as a Girondin in the maelstrom of the French Revolution, died in prison in 1794, and there is nothing to indicate that Rammohun before he was 22, knew French and the ideas of revolutionary philosophers well enough to be able to write to Condorcet.[4]

Satyameva Jayate is our official national motto. It would have rejoiced Rammohun's heart to know of it. All the more reason that we make a special effort to see his life steadily and whole. Not panegyrics and paeans of praise but assessment as truthful as we can make them are what this country owes to itself as well as to a great memory. Rammohun himself would have liked us to treat all "sanctified formulae" with "judicious irreverence."

It is essential, to begin with, that we move off the many cobwebs that have collected over a concept that has, through a combination of circumstances, come to stay in our historical literature—the concept of a so-called Renaissance in 19th century India. If the expression has a limited connotation as have, for example, phenomena like the Carolingian Renaissance of the 12th century Renaissance in Europe, as prolegomena to the stupendous events which in the 15th century and subsequently made epochal changes in the history of our planet, if, that is to say, there is no intention to equate on the plane of history what happened in 19th century India with the Renaissance which began in 15th century to change the face of Europe and the world, which brought in its train the Reformation, and somewhat later the full shape of the bourgeois phase of human history as moulded by earth-shaking events like the French Revolution (1789) and the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century, there can be no quarrel with a designation which on the face of it, (and even in the case of the European 15th century Renaissance) is more or less rhetorical.

When Bankimchandra Chatterjee wrote in his monthly *Bangadarshan* (1878) on the revival of philosophy, logic and literature in 15th century Bengal and reflected on parallelisms, admittedly remote, with what was happening in a different way in faraway Florence in Italy, it was a delicious and permissible exercise of intellectual fancy. If, in discussing the wonderful story of the *Bhakti* movement in India, spreading all over the peninsula, with phases of benign quietism, as well as, on occasion, of strident dynamism in the hands, for example, of such saints of Maharashtra as Tukaram and Ramdas, one speaks of a new, if still rather limited, dimension, it would again be significant historical reflection. But if it is claimed that certain 19th century trends appearing among the *literati* in Bengal and spreading out to the English-knowing *elite* in the rest of what came to be British India were of an order of importance that was not only equal to but above that of the 15th century Renaissance in Europe, one should think of the claim as fantastic, explicable only as a reflex of the inferiority complex forced on us by foreign rule.

There was no harm done when Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-84) used the term "renaissance" as well as नवजागरित in Bengali with reference to the movement pioneered by Rammohun, for it was not expected of that eminent evangelist to weigh his words like a historian must. When men like Shivanath Shastri and Bepinchandra Pal followed suit, there was reason neither for surprise nor worry. When even a well-meaning friend of India like C.F. Andrews gave the title "The Renaissance in India" to his book published in 1912, again there was no need for consternation. One might lift one's brow a little but not be particularly perturbed when Benoy Ghosh, the most diligent recent biographer of Vidyasagar, compared Calcutta of the 19th century with 15th century Florence—it is interesting that Ghosh has since then made a right-about turn and is often seen busy denigrating what he had once lionised in our 19th century history. One finds it hard to repress a guffaw when a great scholar in philology, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, rushing in where he should know he does not belong, contemplates Bengal in the 19th century and in a fine frenzy discovers that for a parallel he could "think only of 5th-4th century B.C. in Athens and 16th-17th century in London and in Paris."[5] It becomes difficult, however, to believe one's eyes, but one must because it is in cold, uncontradicted print, when the late Jadunath Sarkar, one of our pre-eminent modern

historians, stern searcher of facts and like Ranke, intent on shedding all *arriere-pensee*, every prior predilection and in our case especially, all patriotic prejudice, is found perpetrating the celebrated purple passage at the end of the Dacca University "History of Bengal" on the British victory at Plassey (1757) as "the beginning . . . . of a glorious dawn, the like of which the history of the world has not seen elsewhere . . . . truly a Renaissance, wider, deeper and more revolutionary than that of Europe after the fall of Constantinople. . . . ."[6]

Less enthusiastically but without demur, R.C. Majumdar and K.K. Datta, both well known professional historians, employ the terms 'Renaissance' and 'Renascent' with reference to India in the 19th century. Professor Susobhan Sarkar, one of our truly thoughtful historians, whose brochure, under the pen-name of 'Amit Sen,' helped in the forties the currency of 'Bengal Renaissance' in popular as well as academic parlance, has found himself on reflection troubled with basic queries : "The true synthesis is the fusion of two opposites into a third higher entity which supersedes the earlier stages of development. Where is that higher 'third' in our renaissance and why was synthesis so often necessary ?"[7] His plea, correctly, appears to be that inspite of serious differences on the nature of our 19th century experience and the terminology of it, there has been on the making of modern India a wide and continuing influence of the phenomenon. A fastidious Bengali scholar, Atulchandra Gupta in his introduction to "Studies in the Bengal Renaissance"[8] set his face against "facile comparison and analogy" but of course he had to reconcile himself to the title of the book. Whatever one's caveat, this terminology passes muster among India's *elite* today and also among foreign students like Stephen Hay and David Kopf of nineteeth century Indian history.

The main reason, perhaps, for the great Jadunath holding forth as he did on this issue is what I may be permitted to call his one faulty fixation submerged, of course, by his many virtues—एको हि दोषो गुणाप्तन्निपति निमज्जतीन्दो : किरणेष्विवबांक : his one faulty fixation, Anglophila. In the case of a very different man, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, who belongs to quite another plane but is happily or otherwise a contemporary and much applauded interpreter of India to foreigners, one finds the same fixation. Professedly contemptuous of cant and always more than ready to see (or when he cannot see, sense) evil rather than good in his own

country's culture, he glibly discusses "the idology of the Indian Renaissance," affirms the correctness of the term and denies its suggestion of a "false analogy", because, it is clear, of "the intellectual affiliations of the activities comprised within it." In his "autobiography of an unknown Indian," almost rapturously acclaimed in the Anglo-Saxon world, he does not hesitate to reproduce a long passage from Bankimchandra Chatterjee's "Rajani", portraying an English-educated Bengali who poured into his host's ears "the most entrancing scholarship"—a quick mish-mash of quotations from Shakespeare and Kalidasa, Thucydides and Tacitus, Comte and Mill and Schopenhauer and Huxley and Darwin and Owen and Buchner and whoever else have you. Old Bankim must have been laughing in his sleeves when he wrote it, little suspecting it would be thought an "attractive portrait"—the clear lineaments of a complete bore are indeed writ large on it. Chaudhuri, however, does not even suggest a smile as he offers the quotation. To him the "Indian Renaissance" was a splendid "torch race", the relay of runners beginning with Rammohun and ending with Tagore and Gandhi and—why not ?—even Nehru. He welcomes what he himself describes as a peculiar instance of "cultural colonialism" practised by Britain in India, "the wholesale transplantation of the modes of thinking evolved by one culture complex to a society belonging to and inheriting quite a different one." He stands at the other remove so to speak, from former British scholar and civil servant, G.T. Grantt, who in "The Legacy of India" records with regret that from the point of view of culture the period of British rule has been "the most sterile in Indian history." To Shri Chaudhuri, of course, the pre-British phase of Indian life is worth little, for this country is in his eyes the "continent of Circe."[9]

It is a glib and gullible notion that like Western Europe waking from the lethargy and squalor of the Middle Ages through vivifying contact with the legacy of Greece and Rome—which, of course, is an over-simplified version of a great and complicated event—India in the early 19th century was roused from intellectual and spiritual coma by the light that came from Britain. This view still dominates in our schools but happily, recent research is making significant re-appraisal of 18th century India, an important but perhaps planfully neglected theme for a long period. British historiography has contributed largely towards the distortion of our

perspectives by an often deliberate darkening of the day when Muslim hegemony was losing grip and rising regional forces were still unable to develop a true all-India image. As familiarity with Persian rapidly diminished, the immediate past became to the 19th century almost a sealed book, only to be probed, if at all, with British instruments. Till he turned with ardour towards the West, Rammohun was firmly rooted in the upper class Persian-Sanskrit culture of his time; a familiar and frequent charge against him was close association with Muslims, as when he was kept out of the Committee which founded Hindu College; he seems to have contemplated writing a life of Muhammad though, he never did; his *Tehfat-ul* (of which more later) and *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* bear witness to the adult orientation of his thought; of all people, he could never feel his inherited culture so inconsequential that he would be dazzled and transfixed by the shining light from the West. No sensitive person, besides, could fail to see the "cold, selfish and unfeeling" atmosphere brought in by an entirely alien and rapicious force from abroad—do we not remember Byron's lament on 'the Isles of Greece' : "A tyrant ? But our tyrants then, were still at least our countrymen" ? Rammohun may have later taken a favourable view of British power in India, but he was deeply aware of the refinement, elegance and innate nobility of his country even in decline, for that alone could enable him to confront the new phenomenon of his time with dignity and poise.

However, there should be no surprise at some initial euphoria over the concept of "Renaissance", but there has also been a lot of re-thinking among our scholars. It is salutary to remember that even Marxist thinking, inspite of an in-built hostility towards British imperialism in India, appeared for some time rather confused over Karl Marx's reference to the objectively "regenerating" role of British rule, however, vile its motives, though of course the confusion was quickly corrected. When Marx had written about Britain performing the role of "the unconscious tool of history" in bringing about something like a "social revolution" in immemorial India he was by no means forgetting or condoning her terrible crimes. With prophetic fire he had asked if the bourgeoisie had anywhere achieved change in society without dragging numberless men though dirt and blood and tears. Even as he had spoken of Britain as history's handmaid in forcing unwonted changes in Indian life, he had stressed at the same time that "the Indian will

not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie" till the workers seized power in Britain to free India or till "the Hindus (*i.e.*, Indians) themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the British yoke altogether."[10]

The issue, indeed, was a great deal more complicated and the glib idea of an East-West fraternisation fathered by Rammohun Roy, germinating on our soil and finding efflorescence in our history so that, in more or less friendly fashion, freedom evolved in India from precedent to precedent—though never quite stated so baldly—was given up. Paeans on our 19th century Renaissance in the old manner are also happily no longer heard. Jadunath Sarkar notwithstanding, there can be no comparison of it with the European Renaissance which in literature and art, in religion and philosophy, in science and technology and exploration, in politics and government, that is to say, in every facet of life brought in a great new phase of human endeavour. The socio-economic order historically achieved by the bourgeoisie—an achievement which over the first four hundred years, with its luminous lights and searing shadows, is a massive wonder, beside which one can hardly even place a timorous, largely derivative and often unsure phenomenon that was the twinkle of intellectual life in 19th century India. For the regeneration of this country, loaded down by her past, the truly creative element has been and still is the potential of her submerged masses, ready and willing, whenever the call name, to fight the alien conqueror between 1757 and 1857 and also subsequently with whatever means were handy. Insofar as the work of our 19th century stalwarts helped directly or indirectly to achieve a real link between the masses and a necessarily *elite* leadership, it is of course important and memorable. In Rammohun, the first among those stalwarts, besides, there was an extraordinary combination of qualities, which is unique evidence of the fecundity of Indian genius even in the most heart-breaking circumstances, circumstances of the kind that prevailed during the early days of the British in India.

In his never-ceasing public endeavour and in the impact he left on his own and succeeding generations, Rammohun deserves to be venerated as the symbol of his country's recovery. However, he never bowed low before the British blast that had overtaked India, though occasionally, on account of circumstances he could not

control, he had to bend and adjust himself. Moved by deep love for the people, inspite of a certain ineradicable distance from them, he laboured hard throughout life for the social, religious, intellectual and political regeneration of the land. He sought to the end of his days to build a bridge between India and Europe, shedding all prejudice and pride, but he did so not as a supplicant—for he was rooted in his own culture which he prized highly, and while he admitted the over-all superiority of the contemporary West he could independently evaluate the lessons learnt. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore, Rammohun knew that there was "no escape for us until we have taken from the West whatever is worthwhile" but that "if we stand at their doors with palms outstretched, we shall only be turned away again and again." "To go to the British with bowed head and folded hands is to arouse what is petty and mean in their character." Rammohon taught his people to the extent of his power that through thought and action, through suffering, and purposeful toil, we could also be strong as the West apparently was. This, indeed, is the reason why Rammohun is the first and frontal figure in the history of what may be called, as it has been by K.M. Panikkar, "India's Great Recovery."[11]

II

What manner of man was Rammohun who has won the acclaim of the ages, whom the great Orientalist, Max Muller once described as "a true prince, a real *Raja*, if *Raja* also, like *Rex*, meant originally the steersman, the man at the helm." The title of *Raja* was conferred on him, inspite of objection from the then British Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, on the eve of his being charged by the Mughal Emperor Akbar II in 1830 with the task of representing grievances of the Delhi Court to the British King. It is notable also that as the first of modern India's immortals he had another title given by his admiring fellow-countrymen, the title, later worn by Gandhi, of *Mahatma*—this, symbolically, was the link between two dissimilar yet associated souls.

To many of us the portrait of him by a foreign artist is a visual memory from childhood for copies of it would hang in almost every educated Bengali home. The picuture of him, in words by Victor Jacquemont, French naturalist and traveller, is also well known.

He was, we learn, "tall, stout rather than fat and of a middle complexion among the Bengalies . . . . a very slight moustache, his hair rather long behind, thick and curly. There is vigour in his physiognomy and calmness, dignity and goodness." The French observer was perceptive as his words suggest : ". . . . He has grown in a region of ideas and feelings which is higher than the world in which his countrymen live; he lives alone; and though perhaps the consciousness of the good he is accomplishing affords him a perpetual source of satisfaction, sadness and melancholy mark his grave countenance."[12]

Never inclined towards ascetic practices, perhaps even something of a hedonist, he would have been at home among the 'Nagaraks' of ancient India and in the urban civilization fast evolving in the West. For all the aloofness of spirit which, to some extent at any rate is the inevitable concomitant of genius, he could not keep away from deep involvement in fundamental assignments arising out of the needs of his times. Far indeed from a predilection for masochism which one finds in many representative Indians throughout the ages, he must have felt, as did all those to whom, in the words of Keats, "the misery of the world was misery and will not let them rest."

When the peculiar context of his times is remembered, it will indeed appear that he fought with phenomenal courage against tremendous odds and he could do so because there was practical streak in his character. As Sylvain Levi once remarked about him, he had the rare quality of being able to translate "into practice by the force of will the dictates of idealism." He was born with a native talent which though not considered extraordinary, perhaps accounts for his family expecting him to make a mark and providing him with as good an education as was open to him and his like at the time. Early in life he learnt Bengali and Sanskrit, also a little Persian which, along with Arabic, he studied more deeply in Patna, the seat then of an urbane, if unostentatious, culture representing a delicate and mellow blend of the Hindu and Muslim currents of Indian life. Leaving aside obviously exaggerated accounts of his having studied Aristotle and Euclid in Arabic and his plunging himself into the limpid depths of Persian poetry, one may safely assume that his stay in Patna at an impressionable age meant the depositing of the seeds of spiritual restlessness and a certain nonconformity in what Iqbal Singh calls "the fertile interstices of his

mind." After Patna, his parents urged him to take the "yearning road to Benares," perhaps expecting that if the young hopeful failed to make good in the service of the temporal power which then required proficiency in Persian, he might have an alternative career to fall back upon through mastery of Sanskrit essential to the still important sacerdotal career. To Rammohun, it was an exciting quest. In Patna he had been impressed by the simplicity of Muslim piety and the austerely uncomplicated structure of the theology of Islam. While thoughts of heresy were still far from his mind, with a certain intellectual and emotional precocity he drank deeply of the sacred lore of Hinduism, finding perhaps in Vedantic literature the sanction he instinctively wanted for an incipient non-conformity and for a germinating conviction that there was a unifying principle underlying all religions, that if somehow the quintessence of faith could be distilled, or extricated from the subtle overgrowth of dogmas and rituals a common denominator of man's spiritual heritage and of right conduct could perhaps be found.

It is easily understandable that between the young and unusual prodigy and his "immediate kindred" there grew a "coolness" which might have been partly the reason for his spending nearly a decade away from home. Too much apocrypha, however, have accumulated over his reported peregrinations—the somewhat romantically depicted journeyings in Tibet being more than doubtful—and it is likely that the young man, leaving the shelter of the parental roof, was seeking ways and means of fending for himself in a changing social milieu. Even as his father tried to initiate him in the mysteries of running landed estates, Rammohun, never allergic towards things of this world wanted to explore prospects of money-making in that magnetic new city of those days, Calcutta, which he began to visit in 1792-94. Later, he was fairly successful in money-lending and speculative transactions, dealing in what was called the 'Company's paper', forerunner of Indian gilt-edged securities, and buying landed property, thus coming in close contact with Europeans needing quick cash and preferring to deal with a cultivated native. There is no need to go into personal details, but it seems un-deniable that where money was concerned he was ready to be oblivious even of filial obligation, turning a deaf ear to parental cries of distress and not too anxious for the family's weal. By 1810 he was a businessman of standing and also a not inconsiderable landowner. Somewhat unexpectedly of one who is generally

looked upon as a paragon of spirituality, Rammohun was indeed a man of the world, turning away neither from its temptations not its trials, with many lapses from grace but at his best in line with old India's *Rajarshis* if he is to be placed in our favourite thought-frame of a *Rishi*. He had felt no acute disinclination towards service under the Company, which he did in fits and starts—one might speculate how the country would have lost if his friend, benefactor and admirer Digby had got him, as he once wanted, firmly ensconced in the Company's service. He was, in any case, the new type of self-made man emerging out of the ruin of the old hierarchies. To an extent he must have been a self-centred practitioner of worldly wisdom, by no means uninterested in personal advancement, but when his total personality is viewed, this element of dross is like dust in the balance against the shining gold of an integrated character. Perhaps without being too conscious of the process, he had decided that if he was to give vent tangibly to what had come to possess him, the ideas about a new approach to life which grew to be his absorption by day and dream by night, he had to have a footing in the society around him, howsoever alien it might appear to his finer sensibilities. Once having achieved that footing, and then gladly and serenely opting for a life of ceaseless toil in impersonal causes, he never cared for any detriment to his private interests. He braved the cruel ridicule and affronts of his countrymen, ignored "the coldness and jealousy of all the great functionaries of Church and State in India," and as contemporary foreign evidence indicates, spent a large proportion of his private fortune—with no hope of public acclaim—for financing his unique propaganda among the people and "acts of the purest philanthropy and benevolence."[13]

Rammohun knew more or less ten languages : Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Hindustani, Bengali, English, Hebrew, Greek, Latin and French. He took his first lessons in English when he was some twenty-two years old; in 1805, Digby found he could "merely speak (in English) well enough to be understood." Later, of course, his mastery of English came in for high praise from men like Jeremy Bentham, but it is noteworthy that his first publication, which was in many ways striking and yet remains somewhat neglected, came out around 1803. This what '*Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin*' (A Gift to Deists) where he appeared in the role of an iconoclast firmly, if quietly, flourishing the weapon of reason against established

intolerances and for invoking the fundamental unity of the god-head. It shows Rammohun taking his stand on Indian soil, drawing sustenance for his quest from Indian roots, deriving a new rationalism from native sources, disproving the legend, still persisting, that the awakening in India, which Rammohun symbolised, was *entirely* the result of the intellectual impact of the West. In a brilliant recent paper, Professor Sumit Sarkar of Jadavpur University points out how in this trenchant treatise Rammohun applied his criteria of "reason" and "social comfort" with devastating effect to establish even the then startling proposition that "falsehood is common to all religions without distinction."[14] Rammohun was, of course, nowhere near being an atheist or even an agnostic. Perhaps Derozio alone, among the luminaries of the 19th century Indian renaissance, might have evolved into unbelief—this is evident from his citation from Bacon that if a man will begin with certainties he shall end in doubt and his spirited self-defence that he was "neither afraid nor ashamed to confess having stated the doubts of philosophers", adding that though he had 'never denied the existence of God in the hearing of any human being' he told his pupils both sides of the argument and if he was to be 'condemned for the atheism of some' he deserved also 'credit for the theism of others".[15]

Rammohun's admirers have generally lowlighted his *Tuhfat-ul* as immature but it is, from the point of view of a rationalising effort in the prevailing mood of easy credulity, a memorable piece of work. His allows only for three basic tenets to be upheld on the ground of their being reportedly common to all religions and hence being rooted in the life of man, also "natural". These were, first, belief in a single creator, the concept significantly being proved acceptable to Rammohun not by sheer faith but by the argument from design; second, existence of the soul, and third, belief in an after-world where rewards and punishments are to be suitably meted out. Even the two latter tenets rest on ideas that, he said, remain "hidden and mysterious," and are acceptable only on grounds of social utility, fear of punishment in the next world being an effective deterrent from undesirable conduct. Rammohun rules out such things as belief "in a God qualified with human attributes as anger, mercy, hatred and love," he rules out belief in divinely inspired prophets and in miracles, in priestcraft and sanctified ritual; he rules out also the "hundreds of useless

hardships and privations regarding eating and drinking, purity and impurity, auspiciousness and inauspiciousness" which derived from force of habit, from subservience to priests, from sheer irrationality, thus being "detrimental to social life and sources of trouble and bewilderment to the people." The brilliant scholar already mentioned, Sumit Sarkar, rightly says that one nearly reaches here "the vanishing point of religion" and "the logic seems to have frightened the later Rammohun himself "who, though a "prolific translator of his own works, never brought out English or Bengali editions of the *Tuhfat-ul*."[16]

When Rammohun wrote this tract he almost surely knew no Gibbon, but some of its formulations are faintly reminiscent of such passages in the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" as refer to the numerous religions of antiquity which were "to the philosopher equally false, to the populace equally true and to the magistrate equally useful." That Rammohun stopped short and did not positively proceed from *Tuhfat-ul* premises is also a memorable historical event. It remains a phenomenon—whether with happy or unhappy consequences is another matter—that from Rammohun Roy to Gandhi and Tagore and from Shah Waliullah to Iqbal and Azad, modern India has not produced a single outstanding atheist or agnostic (Vidyasagar's case remains doubtful and arguable), let alone a materialist or sceptical front-rank philosopher in the last two hundred years.[17]

After Rammohun's death his *Tuhfat-ul* was forgotten, to be rescued from oblivion in 1884 by the publication of an English translation with a somewhat apologetic introduction by Rajnarain Bose, then president of the Adi Brahmo Samaj which Rammohun had founded. Let it be stressed that before the possibility of seriously imbibing European thought he had averred that human beings "are naturally social beings," that the roots of ethical and behaviour systems projected by the various religions of mankind can be traced not to any supernatural authority and revelational inspiration but to the needs of particular societies in which men are organised. He affirmed the intelligibility of phenomena and the inadmissibility of supernatural explanations, exposed the fallacy of relying on ancestral authority, declared that "truth is to be followed although it happens to be against what the majority believe," and that the ultimate criterion of truth is that it is demonstrable, that is, it should not be "repugnant to reason." No doubt, he

posited faith in the Creator, but faith whose practical expression must always be in ethical conduct, in dedication to the good of the society. There is no denying "the sincerity, the delicacy and the compassion" informing the great man's conception.[18]

Indian scholarship has the obligation to try and unravel the roots of Rammohun's thinking. A suggestive idea came from Brajendranath Seal, namely, that *Tuhfat-ul* owed something to early Muslim rationalism, to the Mutazalis of the 8th century and the *Muwahhidin* of the 12th, but how the trend was transmitted remains obscure. It is still to be known how far Rammohun's interest had been drawn to the significance of the many popular monotheistic cults, almost all lower-caste, at once strikingly egalitarian and somewhat esoteric, some of them denounced by the elite for alleged perversities of ritual—heterodox sects like the Charan Dasi sect of Charan Das in Alwar, the Kartabhaja sect of Aulchand in Nadia, the Spashtadayak sect of Rupram Kaviraj, the Swami Narayan sect of Sahajananda Swami of Oudh, the Paltu Dasi, the Balarami and other sects. Rammohun himself was familiar with the doctrines of Kabirpanthis, Nanak-panthis, Dadu-panthis and the Ramayats of northern India and claimed fraternity with them. He was a proud Indian, inspite of the cruel limitations of his age when the British, puffed up with ill-gotten power and pelf, ran berserk over Bengal. If it is meant, he wrote once, that we are indebted to the English for "useful mechanical arts, I am ready to express my assent and also my gratitude; but with respect to science, literature and religion I do not acknowledge that we are placed under any obligation. . . . We have still a *philosophical and copious language of our own*, which distinguishes us from other nations who cannot express scientific or abstract ideas without borrowing the language of foreigners."[19]

It appears that once in conversation with the Christian missionary, Alexander Duff, Rammohun had spoken of his having read about the Reformation in Europe, the effort to shed corrupt accretions and to restore Christianity in its pristine purity and the analogy of it with his own hopes of "reformation of the popular idolatry." Rammohun of course, spoke discursively and did not press the analogy which in any case is not valid. However, there is not doubt of Rammohun's passion for probing into the roots of religion and behaviour by means as much as possible of the critico-comparative method. He could be at home in Hinduism, Islam and

Christianity, could zealously defend each as against the other – for this he was called by some a *Moulvi*, even a *Zabardast Moulvi*, his partiality for Muslim society being quite a count against him, and others called him a Christian *padre*—not a bad appellation for the man who had written "The Precepts of Jesus," claiming them to be the most conducive to the moral and material improvement of mankind. He had once composed a document submitted to the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1832 wherein he had spoken, doubtless only rhetorically, of England and India emerging as "two free and Christian countries, united as they will then be by resemblance of language, religion and manners."[20] It should at once be stressed that Rammohun had always opposed conversion of Indians to Christianity, sternly resisting the most alluring overtures made to him, for example, by Middleton, Bishop of Calcutta. For all his zeal for 'reform' he remained to the end of his days a proud Hindu, wearing the sacred Brahminical thread throughout life, almost ostentatiously taking a Brahmin cook with him to England though perhaps his gastronomic preference was Muslim, pronouncing the mystic syllable '*Om*' as he breathed his last. Obviously, there were in his make-up elements that were contradictory, but must a great man be all of a piece, which is not quite human ?

From 1815 onwards Rammohun published numerous books and pamphlets—among them Bengali and English translations of the Upanishads, an English abridgement of *Vedanta Sar*, polemics, controversies, tracts against the self-immolation of Hindu widows (*Sati*), "Precepts of Jesus" which got him the angry sobriquet of 'heathen' from orthodox Christians and sparked off a controversy in which he avidly plunged, though to much personal injury. His own religious approach was embodied, pre-eminently, in the Brahmo Samaj which he had founded. The trust deed, memorably lauded by the great Ranade, mentioned its aim, "the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe" and stipulated, that "no graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted. . . ." in the Samaj premises. Significantly, it was added that "in conducting the said worship or adoration, no object, animate or inanimate, that has been or is or shall hereafter become or be recognised as an object of worship, by any man or set of men, shall be reviled or slightingly

or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to. . . .". Rammohun had felt that in an imperfect world of differences in faith religious toleration was a categorical imperative; he knew that bereft of charity, religion was but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

"By taking the path which conscience and sincerity direct, I born a Brahmin, have exposed myself to the complainings and reproaches even of some of my relations. . . . At any rate, whatever men may say I cannot be deprived of this consolation : my motives are acceptable to that Being who beholds in secret and compensates openly." This is what Rammohun wrote in the preface to his 'Abridgment of the Vedanta' which was witness, his biographer Miss Collet truly said, "to his continuity with the historic past of India and as the implement enabling him to connect her with a progressive future." If with his concept of a 'rapproachement' of all religions—no alien thought in a country where Mahatma Kabir had preached his *Bharatpanth* and Akbar essayed *Din Ilahi*—he roused the ire of orthodox Hindus, Muslims and Christians, it should be no surprise. His criticism of the sternness of Islam towards 'non-believers' offended the faithful. Christian missionaries were indignant at his rejection of Trinitarianism and the miracles of Christianity. To orthodox Hindus he was an apostate—not merely an eclectic who could be comfortably derided as an eccentric but a crusader against age-old beliefs and rites and usages, who had compounded his sin with the "double taint" of Islam and Christianity.

Since 1815, when he settled in Calcutta and set up the short-lived 'Atmiya Sabha'—venue of sharp debate with upholders of orthodoxy like Subramanya Sastri and Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar—he had come in fairly close touch with Western thought and recent crucial happenings like the revolution in France and its sequel in the Napoleonic era. Locke and Bacon, the French 'philosophers', Gibbon and Hume, Tom Paine and Jeremy Bentham—such were among the influences on his mind.[21] With the last named, whom he met in England, he was in intimate communication, Bentham once addressing him as an "intensely admired and dearly beloved collaborator in the service of mankind." Perhaps our unfortunate and somewhat amusing 19th century penchant for Indo-Anglian parallelism is responsible for Kishorichand Mitra's discription of Rammohun as a "religious Benthamite", since Rammohun judged different creeds not according to one's notion of their truth or

falsity but to their social utility, their relevance to the task of maximization of human happiness and the minimization of misery. One wonders of Rammohun had really given aeep thought to the premises and propositions of Utilitarianism. Maybe, his Indian mind would have rejoiced in the tremendous gibe of Nietzsche (of which naturally he was unaware, for it was made much later) : "Who wants happiness ? Only the Englishman does !" His continuous concern, however, with "reason" and "social comfort" suggest that the preoccupation of his traditional admirers with the idea put forward by Miss Collet, for example, that "the root of his life was religion" is not entirely well founded. With good reason Max Muller and Monier Williams called him "the father of Comparative theology", for he was earnestly investigating the role of different religions to evolve, if he could, a universal variety of it. But he did so with a purpose, the welfare of humanity. He thought the Vedas to be sublime but he fought ploytheism and idolatry less for the sake of the souls of the believers than, to quote his favourite phraseology, for their "political advantage and social comfort". The authority of Miss Mary Carpenter is three for the great man's purported desire that on his tomb should be inscribed a quotation from Persian poetry that "the true way of serving God is to do good to main."

To call this "Colossus"—an appelation given by a historian as critical of him as R.C. Majumdar—primarily a man of God, however sublime the connotation of the phrase may be, is to do him something less than justice. Brajendranath Seal speaks of him rather ecstatically as the rationalist thinker with a universal outlook who calmly, fearlessly, truthfully, "probed, fathomed, dissected" ideas and events, and was at the same time, on the plane of action, social reformer, campaigner for scientific education and press freedom, renovator of the country's traditions and the seeker of a new life. Assessment today needs no element of ecstasy, but within the limitations of his time and space Rammohun was a great enough man for the acclaim of succeeding generations.

To the popular mind, he is remembered perhaps mainly for his campaign against *Sati*, the Hindu practice, by no means universal but extensive and monstrous enough, of the self-immolation of widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands. There is no doubt that if over this issue one man is to be remembered—apart from Governor-General Bentinck who ordered abolition of the enormity—

it is Rammohun. At grave risk to his life he preached against the inhuman but time-honoured practice, ceaselessly argued for a long stretch of years that the scriptures, properly interpreted, never sanctioned such horror, visited burning *ghats* to dissuade, if he could, relatives from enforcing the terrible custom and did all that was in his power to secure abolition of it. Trivial efforts, unfortunately, have been made in recent years to depreciate Rammohun's role—thus questioning his claim to priority in the campaign against *Sati*—on the basis of Mrityunjoy Vidyalankar's somewhat fitful and by no means comparable formulations, questioning also this pioneer character in other spheres.[22] On the plea that Rammohun had objected to legislative prohibition of the practice when Bentinck had asked for his views, it is pressed with something like glee that after all Rammohun was no anti-*Sati* crusader ! His years of courageous campaigning are by such critics conveniently blurred over; his vigorous personal effort in England to counter the orthodox Hindu petition to the King in Council against Bentinck's *Sati*-abolition decree is forgotten. It is conveniently ignored that Rammohun's response to Bentinck's query was by no means a recent discovery, and that inspite of our people knowing it, their memory enshrines none else than Rammohun as the prime mover against the disgrace. It is forgotten that Rammohun had excruciating experience of the hostility of the authorities, particularly the Marquis of Hastings, and that with freshly acquired Western ideas about *laissez-faire*[23] he was reflecting seriously on the limits of legislation. Perhaps also his mind felt trouble by the dangers of an alien authority legislating on tradition-hallowed social practices. Something of the processes of thought that made Lokamanya Tilak campaign against anti-plague inoculation and the raising of the age of consent by legislation in the last years of the 19th century may, somewhat differently, have passed through his mind.

In December 1818, a district magistrate of Hooghly in Bengal reported that many people looked upon widow-burning not merely "as a religious act but as a choice entertainment". Human nature is peculiar, and the mingling of a rare sadistic delight with religious exultation might have offered an exquisitely complex, if entirely perverse, thrill. Perhaps even the prospective victims sometimes found in it a sort of masochistic ecstasy which they would not forego. It remains a fact that *Jauhar* and such rites still evoke in

many minds pride and exultation. A celebrated picture, *Sati*, by Nandalal Bose could be painted in the 20th century with a sense of spiritual understanding that, outside India, would seem bizarre. However, there is no need for us to be touchy about Western sneers at 19th century *Sati* scenes in India. In Europe, not too long ago, *autos da fe*, the burning of heretics and their breaking on weels, hanging, drawing and quartering for public exhibition, etc. were recognised items of general entertainment. Let us brush aside such cobwebs and remember with respect Rammohun's spirited, often lone, struggle.

Critics have pointed out that Rammohun's stress on the virtues of the ascetic life enjoined on Hindu widows—a polemic stress, as he was fighting to save them from death by burning on the husband's pyre—meant objectively some little difficulty in the way of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar who in the 'fifties of the 19th century campaigned and secured legislation permitting widow remarriage among Hindus. A tract of his, written in 1823, has also been cited to show that in view of wide disapprobation he did not regard widow re-marriage as a good practice. As against this, one of his early biographers, Nagendranath Chattopadhyay, has recorded that Rammohun, while in England, had expressed a desire to take up the cause of widow-marriage on his return home. One should remember that while struggling against *Sati* and facing overwhelming odds, he was perhaps not ready to take on yet another big challenge at the same time. Being no revolutionary in temper, besides, and actually aware of the hide-bound social scene around him, he was perhaps not too keen, to being with, on widow re-marriage, but with first-hand knowledge of the West and the life he saw there with his own eyes, his views also advanced. One should not for example forget his 'Brief Remarks regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females' (1822), his articles in his journal *Sambad Kaumudi*, and other essays where he stoutly defended the rights of women to inheritance of property, to education and enlightenment, and opposed evil practices like polygamy and child marriage. He may not have been able in his time to do much in this direction, but must our expectations be so excessive ? In any case, it is so much to his credit that in the context of his day he could write beautifully on women's role in society, citing the ancient instances of Maitreyee, Lilavati, Bhanumati and others, as he tried to save widows from the supremely

heroic but utterly stupid and horrifying self-destruction demanded by society. He shows in his regard a deep delicacy of spirit which deserves a special salute.[24]

There is no need to enter into a controversy about Rammohun's share of credit in the setting up of Hindu College, precursor of Presidency College, Calcutta, in 1817. In Dr. R.C. Majumdar's view and that of some others, it was very little, while on the other hand is the idea that the institution was the brainchild of David Hare and Rammohun Roy, the former being perhaps the one universally hallowed British name even today in Bengal. It is known that Rammohun was excluded from the committee of the founders of Hindu College on account of continuous opposition from leaders of Hindu orthodox who sternly disapproved of him. However, by far the most important contribution of Rammohun in the sphere of Indian education was his letter to Lord Amherst in 1823 where he opposed the proposed setting up of a Sanskrit College and asked for introduction by Government of 'Western' education. This what that sparked off the contest between so-called 'Orientalists' and 'Anglicists', with Rammohun in the latter camp. His role in this regard has found nearly unanimous acclaim for a long enough time, but now that free India has problems of universal education to grapple with, a fundamental rethinking is required and happily has to some extent begun.

Even now it is widely thought that determination of the controversy in favour of the 'Anglicists' has been historically justified. The doors of modern education, one is told, would otherwise have been barred to us for a long time as well as entry into the higher civil service (which perhaps is the more important, objective reson to the rising *literati* with their limited ambitions and reconciliation to British rule). A rather simplistic picture is often drawn of an Indian intelligentsia, bereft of the benefits of 'English' education, consisting of *Pandits* and *Moulvies* played off against one another by the mighty British rulers, and entirely ineffective. This view is typical of what Gandhi used to call our 'slave mentality', a disbelief in ourselves and a propensity, rooted by long years of subjugation, towards an ineradicable inferiority complex in relation to the West, rather Britain—for Britain alone has been our widow to the West. The negative, alienating aspects of English education in India, the contented acceptance of a situation where the Indian child has had for generations to imbibe knowledge, when he tries

it seriously, through a language he never learnt at this mother's knee, the virtual sterilisation, in consequence, of the Indian's innate capabilities, the condemnation of a whole people, with their rich and variegated past, to a secondary, uncreative, derivative existence in the republic of learning—however, we may rejoice in the efflorescence of Indian genius inspite of such handicaps, genius which only the truly exceptional quality of our invincible India can explain—these negative aspects have not engaged the thinking of our intelligentsia to the extent that was needed since the days of Rammohun Roy.

Nothing warms the cockles of the Indian intellectuals' heart even today as much as British appreciation. We do not even resent the patronising, the back-patting, the perhaps unwitting laugh in the sleeves when such appreciating is expressed. What is one to make, for example, in Thompson and Garratt's book on Indian history, of a high-flown statement that deserves quotation : "Indians have learnt to think our thoughts, to see with our eyes, and to express themselves with a nervous and sensitive exactness and beauty which have made them free citizens of the kingdom of English thought and expression, fellow-citizens with ourselves and not strangers inhabiting it on sufferance and temporary licence" ?[25] Such sentiments may come as manna from heaven to our present-day Indo-Anglians who even write poetry in English, but Thompson who knew Bengali and had translated some Tagore should have shown more discrimation. The fault, however, is not in the foreigner but in ourselves, for we do not yet in India seem to realize that the lack of discrimination and depth in the generality of our educated sections is linked with a system still carrying the taint of the 'original sin' when English was made the sheet anchor of our education.

Rammohun must bear his share of responsibility for this predicament, but there were about him many redeeming features. While he admired English and wanted to master it—why not ? he was himself too deeply rooted in Indian languages. He was the first considerable prose writer in his own Bengali, also one of the earliest journalists in Bengali and Persian, getting down to such tasks as borrowing punctuation marks to make his prose understandable and helping elementary technical jobs in the printery. His celebrated letter to Lord Amherst in 1823 pleaded for Western scientific values and by no means necessarily for instruction in

English. One might claim on his behalf a kind of mass approach in his ceaseless endeavour to promote Bengali, his pioneer translations of the Scriptures into the vernacular and the plan of 'Atmiya Sabha' which he had founded, to bring out Bengali versions of English scientific and literary texts. In 1833, the students of Rammohun's Anglo-Hindu School started the *Sarva-Tattva-Deepika-Sabha* pledged to the use of Bengali alone. In his 'Sambad Kaumudi' he once addressed a communication calling for the instruction of children in the principles of grammar of their own language before trying to learn a foreign language. While many of his conservative contemporaries like Radhakanta Deb were keen on Indians learning English on purely pragmatic grounds—in order, for instance, that one might qualify for jobs under the foreigner—Rammohun felt there was nothing progressive in English education *per se*, but stressed "Mathematics, Natural philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences", a perspective which was "totally and significantly lost in the ultimate Macaulay-style literary education" set up in 1835. It appears that Government needed Indians in low-paid jobs, a kind of cadre that Orientalist educational policy could not produce,[26] which cold calculation and not British benevolence, was behind the much applauded educational reforms of the time.

It is an unhappy thought but it does seem to be the case that Rammohun Roy, and following him the stalwarts of the 19th century Indian Renaissance persuaded themselves to the reconciled to the country's subjugation, to a rule more foreign than any of the predecessors of the British in conquest, for the British were never more than birds of passage and of prey, setting, up, for as long as they would last, 'colonies d' exploitation rather than colonies de peuplement'. If history had enabled us to 'learn from the West' without having to be under a fullscale colonial conquest for about a couple of centuries, if the kind of tutelage that India still has to bear could have been avoided, things would have been so different, but we cannot fly in the face of facts. The reality is that even our freedom struggle, not often correctly so called, has long co-existed with penegyrics of foreign rule and enthusiasm over English education. The pattern of change, thus, in the direction of modernisation has been noticeably different in countries which either escaped foreign conquest like Japan or which suffered it for not too long and not too completely like Egypt and Turkey,

countries whose attitude towards a European language was not so adulatory also as ours. Sumit Sarkar, whom I have cited earlier, has indicated, among other significant things, a certain "pattern of retreat" as the years rolled by, and inspite of a non-conformist reputation, massive respectability accrued to Rammohun, and there was a sort of slide-back in his thought and action. This is an important averment, but it calls for searching analysis. Let us not forget anyhow, as Sarkar well puts it, "colonial subjection often puts blinkers on and distorts the greatest of minds".[27] That it happened also in Rammohun's case is no reflection but only an elucidation of his stupendous greatness.

III

Once in the middle 'twenties, Mahatma Gandhi scandalised our *literati* by saying that Rammohun, though known not undeservedly as the Father of Modern India, had a lesser impact on the people than the great men of an earlier day like Kabir. This was because, he said, Kabir communicated with the people entirely in their own idiom, of language and of spirit, while much of Rammohun's major work was but to the elite. However, one reacts to this view, it does seem a fact that our grandiloquently termed 'Renaissance' of the 19th centary suffered from a kind of original sin, detachment from the grass-roots of Indian life.

Long ago Goethe once said to his disciple Eckermann :—"How tame and weak has life itself become during the last two shabby centuries !" He went on to wonder how a man of his time could have "the strength to be true and to show himself as he is". In 19th century India, the western influences were almost entirely British and Victorian—a combination not likely to have particularly exciting intellectual and aesthetic consequences ! British imperialism, with its peculiar guile, attaching to itself every single vested reactionary interest and only letting go that little rope which would keep a small and timorous native *elite* just about content, was more inhibitive of the kind "original nature" which Goethe had in mind. Let this not be forgotten when evaluating the Indian "renaissance" --Rammohun to Tagore and Gandhi *et al.* When this is remembered it is permissible indeed to marvel at the stature, the struggle and the success, limited as it was, of Rammohun. In his own fashion he seems to have felt what years later, a young English poet, Alun, Lewis, who died in World War II was to write about

India : "There is so much to anger you in the human scene, so much to dismay you in the social scene, so much to humble you in the universal scene". And not content with feeling it, Rammohun, the great man that he was, set his hand nobly to do something about it. If he does not fulfil all the expectations we may have from his grandeur, it was not so much his fault but the fault of his times and his environment.[28]

The reason for Bengal's early and rather zealous response to the western impact, for good or for ill or for both, was perhaps partly due to what is historically noticeable, a certain dislike of orthodoxy and a predilection, though rather lax than disciplined, towards non-conformity in that region. Situated at a distance from the heart-land of Hindu civilization, Bengal had been for a time almost overwhelmed by the broad, non-sectarian appeal of Buddhism. Later, caste barriers were so modified, if not sometimes swept away, that an 11th century monarch Ballal Sen had to attempt revivification of caste of importing Brahmins of the requisite orthodoxy from Kanauj. The emancipatory ideas which Islam brought it its wake found in Bengal an avid welcome, Vaishnavism and the medieval cults embracing Hindu and Muslim alike. When Europe came to India, Bengal's response to some of the deeper aspects of her message was perhaps keener than elsewhere. While the South stuck solidly to her own spiritual legacies and the West Coat found greater stimulation in commerce and industry, Bengal was excited by the new evangel, which imperialism could not entirely disort, of intellectual liberation. A proneness of spiritual laxity tended for some time to drive this excitement to excess, and in the eighteen —'thirties, with Rammohun still on the secene, a movement known as 'Young Bengal' threw up some remarkable people who drank of the heady western wine not too wisely, and inspite of a certain feeling for the country [seen, for instance, in the writings of Derozio (1809-31), the Eurasian prodigy who started the movement and died too early to grow to his full stature] cried down everything that was Indian. Sharing Macaulay's notorious view that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth more than the entire native literature of India and Arabia", they decided on aping the ruling race, a performance that, in the conditions of those days, had a definite snob value for the Bengal intellectual and some practical utility for the timidly emerging petty bourgeoise. That by the middle of the 19th century the tide could be turned

dissociation from the deepest agonies and perhaps inarticulate aspirations of his people.

The year Rammohun was born was also the year (1772) which saw the height of perhaps the grimmest and essentially man-made famine in Indian history—a history which, sadly, is so prolific of such calamities—for Bengal was then denuded of fully one-third of her popoulation on account, mainly, of the limitless capacity of a savagely plunderous foreign conqueror. What has passed into legend—the *manvantar* ("Epoch's End") of '76, as it is still remembered in Bengal—was then a most recent and gruesome fact of experience. Between 1770 and 1810, when Rammohun was growing into maturity the land was scoured by organised groups of marauders described in official records as "robbers" who in some cases, as a frightened Governor-General Lord Minto reported in 1810, "had established a terrorism as perfect as that which was the foundation of the French republican power and in truth the *Sirdars* or captains of the band were esteemed and even called the *Hakim* or the ruling power while the government did not possess either authority of influence enough". Throughout the 1770's continued that bizarre phenomenon, the "peculiar visitation" as Warren Hastings described it, of "the stoutest and most active men of India", accused by imperialists of being little more than queer, semi-ascetic kidnappers of children. These were the so-called *Sannyasis* who, like the so-called robber bands of those days, led by Robin Hood figures such as Bhowani Pathak and Raghunath, have become fabulous. But if the *Sannyasis* left the memory of a struggle against the foreign conquerors, so much that in 1883 Bankimchandra Chatterjee drew inspiration from their doings as he wrote *Ananda Math* (wherein occurs the *Vande Mataram* hymn), how much more vivid would have been the impression of them in Rammohun's time !

The early resistance to foreign rule often took forms not easily recognisable; imperialist mentors have taught several generations of us to look on the phenomenon as symptoms of the congenital anarchy of the land and only recent research has begun to show how they were movements of a cruelly disposed peasantry, whether in Bengal under the *Wahabi* leadership of Titu Miyan in the 1830's, when Rammohun was very much in the picture, or in the 'fifties and subsequently in Maharashtra under leaders like Vasudeo Balwant Phadke who have a luminous place in the country's

struggle for freedom. The story of these risings can only be learnt elsewhere, but *a propos* of Rammohun's life it is permissible of think of what impact they had on his mind.

There is not a shred of truth in the imperialist claim, made for example, by Valentine Chirol that the empire built "British greatness on Indian happiness". It could not have been unknown to Rammohun that the background to British-sponsored 'progress' in India was the utterest agrarian misery and the vilest industrial devastation. Rammohun could not have been unaware of the state of things described by a truly perceptive Britisher, Munro, who wrote in 1814 : "Our situation in India has always been precarious. . . . We might now be swept away in a single whirlwind. We are without root" . . . and again in 1824 : "All India is at all times looking for our downfall. The people everywhere would rejoice, or fancy they would rejoice at our destruction". Munro's finding in 1820 was that it was impossible even by "identifying the interests of the upper classes with our own" to "continue to attach the native population to our grovernment".[31] The guile of the imperialist did succeed, however, in winning over the support to British rule from men like Rammohun who were to some extent dazzled by the light from afar and came to believe that without foregoing pride in India's own culture and without surrendering their Indian entity, they could accept an alien rule—this is not too surprising, for the soil for a truly operative national sentiment was far from ripe at the time, not only in India but also largely elsewhere. It is important, however, to bear in mind that the notion that India's resurgence was impossible without the benevolent British intervention is fatuous and false as the example of China, never so completely cowed as India has been by foreign imperialim, proves to the hilt. The Indian national movement arose, as it only could, from India's social conditions, from the social and economic forces generated under imperialism and its many-fangled system of exploitation. Britain ruthlessly destroying the foundations of the old order in India was the unwitting "tool" of history, but it is strange if one believes that India would have remained in a perpetual wilderness if Britain did not play what is called her "regenerating" role. The old Indian society in decomposition on the eve of the British conquest was also on the verge of an elementary form of native bourgeois development. Surely, if the British had not turned up, history in India would not have stood still—Tipu and the Marathas and

Ranjit Singh, the continuing if decadent cultural life in disparate areas from Tanjore and Madurai to the Himalayan foothills, were evidence of vitality that cannot be ignored. Britain's laying of the material basis for the new order by political unification and the building of communications, with the resultant emergance of some kind of industry was done on the foundation of the pauperisation of the peasantry and extreme exploitation in alliance with the most reactionary feudal elements which but for British protection would perhaps have been swept away by the people's anger. This is why Kari Marx who had written of Britain's being the instrument of historical advance in India, said at the same time that India needed to throw off the British yoke, to take possession of the forces unleashed by Britain and achieve liberation.[32]

It is hardly conceivable that Rammohun's perceptive mind did not sense these things. It is perhaps correct to say that he had gone through the torture of such perception, which can be felt through much of his writings and the character and courage which shines through them, but as the years advanced and the hurdles in his way peculiarly piled up, he decided, (since inspite of the devotion of a few close associates he was essentially lonely and never knew how to organise large bodies of men except on the basis of memorarda of various sorts his prolific and restless mind was always ready to prepare) that he had to come to terms with the situation around him, which was truly, in Goethe's earlier quoted words, too "shabby" and "tame" for his greatness to find fitting fruition.

One notices in Rammohun a certain slide-back in his ideas in different spheres—some may call it a genuine evolution but it is permissible to regret a falling-off, as it were, of the sharpness of his thought. The stress on reason and intellectual discrimination in the *Tuhfat-ul* seems blurred in his later eclecticisms, "a desire to be all things to all people, so much so that in England both Unitarian and Evangelical Christians tried to claim him as their own". He was not the kind of man to be unaware of the Eastern proverb that 'the monarchs of Asia were more afraid of the pen of Abul Fazl than of the sword of Akbar.' He knew that inspite of many enormities, Hindus and Muslims were, before the British came, alike eligible to highest posts while under the British system, "so trifling are the rewards held out to native talent that hardly any stimulus to intellectual improvement remains". In his "Ancient Rights of Females" (1822) Rammohun appended a long historical note which

sought a fair and somewhat striking elucidation of Muslim rule in India. Yet in his appeal to the king in Council against the 1823 Press Regulation he praised "Divine Providence" which "at least, in its abundant mercy, stirred up the English nation to break the yoke" of Muslim tyrants.[33] This may be due to a certain discretion being the better part of valour, but it is a pity nonetheless.

The greatness of Rammohun is the reason why our expectations of him are also great. It is no reflection on his greatness if it hurts to find that Rammohun "managed to combine an impressive interest in and sympathy for liberal and nationalist movements in England, France, Naples, Spain, Ireland and even Latin America with a fundamental acceptance of foreign political and economic domination over his own country". This is not to deny that Rammohun blazed the trail for several generations of moderate constitutional agitation which was for a hundred years and more the staple of India's national life—focussing on demands like Indianisation of the services, trial by jury, separation of powers, freedom of the press and participation of upper class Indians in legislatures, etc. It may be true, as one researcher puts it, that with Rammohun began "serious thinking of a purely indigenous character about the agrarian society of Bengal."[34] He had critised the *Zamindari* system and pleaded for a ban on "any further increase of rent on any pretence whatsoever", but his evidence before the House of Commons Select Committee was attacked, not without good reason, for being somewhat soft in criticism of the Company's misdeeds and far too tactful on the issue of *Zamindari* oppression.[35] A rather distressing thing was his support for English colonization in India, a result perhaps of his association with certain elements in pursuit of his combined zamindari, money lending and other business activities and maybe also with his close links with British free traders, the carriers in those days of Utilitarian ideas. It is a pity that allowing himself to take a short-term view of things he could even descend, as he did, to a full-throated defence of indigo planters, against whom the fight of Bengal peasants in the 160s and of Bihar peasants till the second decade of the present century is, to our people, a vivid and exhilarating memory. As Sumit Sarkar points out, "the Rammohun-Dwarkanath section of our intelligentsia seems to have visualized a kind of dependent but still real bourgeois development in Bengal in close co-operation with British merchants and entrepreneurs. The utter absurdity of this illusion is very

obvious today. A single Dwarkanath did not herald a bourgeois spring,and the years from 1813-1833—coinciding almost exactly with the most active period of Rammohun's public life—saw the number of houses paying 'chowkidari' tax in Dacca go down from 21,361 to 10,708. The catastrophic decline in cotton handicrafts threw at least a million out of jobs in Bengal in "a revolution hardly to be paralleled in the history of commerce". The founding father of our Renaissance remained utterly silent about such developments'.'[36]

It is difficult to believe that Rammohun and his close followers like Dwarkanath Tagore (1794-1846), grandfather of the poet, did not understand the peculiar processes of exploitation by the new-fangled foreigner. Passages can be easily found in Rammohun's copious writings on this theme. Dwarkanath himself is reported to have said about the ways of the British : "They have taken all which the natives possed; their lives, liberty, property, and all were held at the mercy of Government".[37] Rammohun himself was perspicacious enough to see the beginnings of the process whereby Ramdulal Dey or Motilal Seal, potential Bengali bourgeois exemplars, were driven to take a very back seat to the new *zamindars* like the Sinhas of Paikpara and the Debs of Sovabazar. Natives were repidly squeezed out of even comprador-type business; Indians were at best permitted to earn middle men's profits and were warned off the founds of industry. A few could compete for the limited opportunities in the professions and in the services, almost entirely, of course, in the lower rungs. The wealthy natives were, willy-nilly, detached from productive functions, for thanks to the permanent settlement rent-receipts flowed in with hardly any entrepreneurial efforts. It is notable that in Bengal and also largely in Maharashtra, both fertile fields of Indian nationalism, industry which grew inevitably on account of the economic geography of the region and other factors, industry came to be dominated by the foreigner or, with the progress of time, largely by non-Bengalis and non-Maharashtrians. Bourgeois liberal values, theoretically espoused, remained bereft of material content and a genuine social basis. For all this undoubted attraction towards social change, even towards revolution in France and elsewhere, Rammohun did not realize the consequences to India of the crafty British policy of attaching to foreign rule "the Rajas, talookdars and other natives" who had a "stake in the country" and felt their interests bound up with those of the rulers.

It is interesting to note that India's first contact with socialist thought was through Rammohun. He had, it appears, met Robert Owen in England and for whatever it is worth, his biographer Miss Collet has left the report of the two men talking to each other at a party. To quote her words, "Owen did his best to convert Rammohun to socialism. As the Scot finally lost his temper, the Hindu was considered to have had the best of the argument."[38] This is not a particularly illuminating reference and may be left at that.

In his own way, Rammohun was a champion of liberty and freedom, with the redeeming grace of being free from every taint of chauvinism, for it does seem that he bore in himself a consuming passion for the unity of mankind in a brotherhood of common moral endeavour. William Adam, the Baptist missionary who became his Unitarian disciple, said about him in words that have became famous. "He would be free or not at all . . . Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul . . . freedom not of action merely but of thought . . . This tenacity of personal independence, this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment on his mental freedom was accompained with a very nice perception of the equal rights of others, even of others who differed most widely from him". Again, in his own way, he carried in his heart an overflowing love of liberty and unaffected cosmopolitan sympathies. When news came to India of the suppression by Austrian troops of the rising of the people of Naples (1821) he felt it keenly, and cancelling an evening appointment with his friend Buckingham wrote : "From the late unhappy news I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European colonies, possessed of a greater degree of the same blessing that they now enjoy".

While the allusion to India might sound to us rather depressing, he added words that exhilarate and deserve to echo through the ages : "I consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own and their enemies as ours. Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been and never will be ultimately successful". In his Persian weekly *Mirat* which in protest against a Press ordinance he closed down, he had written on the discontent of Ireland. When news came to Calcutta in 1820 of the setting up of a constitutional government in Spain he gave a public dinner at the Town Hall.

Shortly before his departure for Europe, news reached India of the revolution in France (1830), and "so great was his enthusiasm", it was reported, "that he could think and talk of nothing else". During his voyage his ship stopped for a while at the Cape of Good Hope, and inspite of having sustained a nasty accident which made him lame for nearly eighteen months he insisted on hobbling over to a French ship berthed in the harbour with a view to saluting "the glorious tricolour" flag of revolution in France. While in England he fought for a free press for India with a memorial to the King which, along with another to the Supreme Court, is notable not only for its rolling periods of noble prose but also of a certain fine spirit which caused the twin documents to be dubbed the 'Areopagitica' of Indian history. Staying in England he associated himself with protagonists of the Reform movement and publicly avowed that in the event of the Reform Bill being defeated he would renounce all connection with England. About his own country's unfreedom he had perhaps, for obvious reasons, to be reticent, but he did not hesitate to aver that contact with Europe and acquisition of knowledge and of qualities called for in modern times would help India win her freedom after a period so to speak of probation, but England should in her own interest try to see that India grew into a willing associate and not "troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy".

What his exact envisagement was is not clear, but the Frenchman Victor Jacquemont has left it on record that "Rammohun told him once (29 June 1828) that India required many more years of English domination so that she might not have many things to lose while reclaiming her political independence". Incidentally, he is said to have told one Sandford Arnot that he thought forty to fifty years were the limit within which India should be free.[39] It remains a fact in any case that the *elite* of India from Rammohun downwards have, by and large, stressed the allegedly beneficent role of the British in India—though of course there have been shining exceptions, and quite often in the same individual one has found contrasting strands of thought. Rammohun must have been a direct and daily witness to the Macaulayesque arrogance and often also sheer superior boorishness of 'the white sahibs in India. When the Viceroy and Governor-General, Lord Mayo, declared in 1868, "we are determined as long as the sun shines in heaven to hold India. Our national character, our commerce demand it,"[40] he was

speaking in a tone entirely representative of his countrymen before and after him in India. The Indian intelligentsia's pathetic faith in Britain's good intentions is indeed a story that some day should be exhaustively told. Only occasionally Tilak might say that British rule was "a predatory foreign incubus rather than a blessing,"[41] but too often would our leaders including even Tilak put their trust in the *bona fides* of such people, lauded to the skies in our political literature, as John Morley whom, with much reason, however, Lenin described, *a propos* of Tilak's arrest and six years' imprisonment (1908) as "that liberal and radical scoundrel". Apart from such gentle souls as Ranade and Gokhale, the Indian predilection for applauding the British advent in India as a God-given blessing has been blatantly noticeable, so much indeed that J.K. Majumdar could bring out in 1937 a whole book culling together panegyrics of British rule uttered by a string of our principal leaders from Rammohun to Gandhi. All this inspite of not only avowed impereailist proconsuls like Curzon and Ronaldshay and the entire tribe of them but also scholars like Henry Sumner Maine and James Fitz James Stephen and so many others expressing themselves candidly enough in their detestation of the Indian people and their conviction that India should for ever remain 'the white man's burden' on account of our being 'the lesser breed'. Happily, the position changed, and howsoever incompletely—for even today our rooted inferiority complex remains—we have got back our self-esteem. In the process we have had to look back to our own past and also to look forward in the direction of the future, to learn, therefore, from the West, for we live in an age when for some 400 years and more Europe has been in the ascendant. As in the case of every great man, there are chinks in the armour of Rammohun Roy, but there is no doubt about his magnificent perception that his country, fallen on evil days, could only rise to eminence if the glory of the past was remembered and related to the tasks called for by an exacting present. This is why even the trend usually called 'Revivalism', which while a factor in favour of the *status quo*, has yet played for historical reasons a role of support to extremist nationalism from time to time, seeks to salute Rammohun Roy and find links with his thought. This is why also purely social reform movements led by eminent characters like Jotiba Govind Phule (1827-90) and Gopal Hari Deshpande (1823-92) in Maharashtra, by later worthies like Veeresalingam (1847-1919) in Andhra and

Kumaran Asan (1873-1924) in Kerala and so many others, thought of British rule as beneficent, and yet did in their time for the country a truly worthwhile job of work. They all looked back to Rammohun as their progenitor and inspirer. The channels cut by either trend have gone fairly deep into the soil of our life—a fact which it is right we keep in mind as we think of Rammohun Roy.

It will be inappropriate to try and sum up the great man's work in cliches, howsoever sonorous they might be turned out. He was on any computation a stalwart, a straight-backed, proud old Brahmin, the very embodiment of what might be called Indo-Muslim aristocracy, ready to shake Europe by the hand and salute her too but on equal terms, reconciling himself to a world he could not shape nearer his heart's desire but always with a dignity and grace which ruled out every suggestion of subservience—the liberal, indeed, with the big *L*, but of genuine Indian vintage—a breed which is now extinct but relevant nevertheless to the needs of our times and truly worthy of respect. In every facet of his life and work there shone his ardour and devotion for the lovely mosaic that is India, there shone also a paramount concern for freedom, personal and social, as the most desired consummation and a feeling, beautiful in its simple nobility, that all men were brothers and must at one time act towards one another as such. Who but Rammohun could, with a natural gesture as it were, give a dinner to celebrate the victory of Spanish colonists in South America against the domination of Spain, and when asked why he did so, rejoin that he knew enough about the barbarities inflicted by Spain's rulers for a long stretch of time on their unfortuate subjects, adding words that have a historic ring; "What! Ought I to be insensible to the sufferings of my fellow-creatures wherever they are or however unconnected by interests, religion or language ?" He dwelt, indeed, as only a few sublime minds can, in a region—'यत्र विश्वं भवन्येकनीडं—' where the world becomes a single nest. And his life of ceaseless toil, too often unrequited by the appreciation of his fellows, set for itself the one all-encompassing aim which has animated this country's age-old civilization :

सर्वंस्तरतु दुर्गाणि सर्वो भद्राणि पश्यतु ।
सर्वः सद्बुद्धिमाप्नोतु सर्वः सर्वत्र नन्दतु ॥

("Let all overcome barriers; let all see things of good report; let all attain true understanding; let all rejoice everywhere".)

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27

RAMMOHUN ROY AND MODERN INDIA

RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE

All earnest attempts at reform, whether religious, social, political, or of any other description, are based on faith in the ultimate triumph of truth and justice and humanity, which is synonymous with a belief in the moral government of the Universe. This is an essential element in religious belief. One would, therefore, expect to find Raja Rammohun Roy, the first all-round reformer in modern India, "above all and beneath all a religious personality. The many and far-reaching ramifications of his prolific energy were forth-puttings of one purpose. The root of his life was religion. He would never have been able to go so far to move his countrymen so mightily as he did but for the driving power of an intense theistic passion.[1]

As in his life so in his writings, religion occupies the foremost place. His writings on religious subjects are the most important and most voluminous. But their very extent and variety are apt to puzzle those who may strive to find out the exact nature of his religious faith. The late Babu Rajnarain Bose had it from his father, a disciple of the Raja, that the latter, before his departure for England, had foretold that after his death various sects would claim him as belonging to their own particular ranks, but he declared that he did not belong to any particular sect. What the Raja foresaw has actually taken place. "It has been said that Rammohun Roy delighted to pass for a believer in the Vedanta with the Hindus, for a Christian among the adherents of that creed, and for a disciple of the Koran with the champions of

Islamism.[2] The truth is that his eclecticism equalled his sincerity."[3] It would be out of place here to enter into a discussion of the question of his religious belief. Suffice it to say that he believed in pure theism, as his *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin* on the one hand and the Trust-deed of the Brahmo Samaj on the other, in addition to many of his other works, prove conclusively. He did not reject any truth to be found in any scriptures or in the teachings of any prophet or saint; he revered and accepted truth from all quarters: but at the same time he did not accept any book or teacher as infallible. It should not, however, be forgotten that though he was thus cosmopolitan in his acceptance of truth, there are reasons to think that he believed in what may be called national or racial manifestations or developments of universal theism.

At the time when he established the Brahmo Samaj, he meant it to be simply a meeting-ground for people of all sects who wished to unite for divine worship, "a place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction as shall behave and conduct themselves to an orderly, sober, religious and devout manner for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the author and preserver of the Universe but not under or by any other name, designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any particular Being or Beings by any man or sect of men whatsoever".[4]

It seems to us, that the Raja may have thought that Theism, though at bottom one all over the world, has yet found various expressions among different races; and though abstract truth is thinkable, yet as it finds actual manifestation in some concrete shape, it is the part of wisdom to allow the abstract universal theism in all countries and among all races to keep its native shape and colour, in which it is embodied, freed, of course, from all that is base and impure, with a broad spirit of toleration for other shapes and colours; and that the future unity of the human race in religion is not to be realised by all mankind following the creed of this or that sect, but by each nation or race giving up all such erroneous and superstitious beliefs and pernicious customs and lifeless rituals as clash with pure Theism, but in every thing else keeping all that is racy of the soil, all that distinctively belongs to the religious genius of that nation or race, in a spirit of discriminating reverence for its own past and of respect and toleration for others.

Professor Monier Williams speaks of him as the first really earnest investigator in the science of comparative theology, which the world has produced.

POSITION OF WOMEN

Social customs and practices have been and are in all countries more or less connected with the religious beliefs of the people. It is, therefore, only natural that Rammohun Roy's programme of religious reform should lead on to and embrace social reform. In all countries and specially in India, social reform consists chiefly in doing away with the disabilities or sufferings incident to difference of sex or the accident of birth. Or, in other words, social reformers have chiefly to fight with the spirit of caste and its evils and the subjection of women to the selfish interests and pleasures or supposed interests of the male sex.

Abolition of the "Suttee"

Rammohun Roy's chief claim to the gratitude of Hindu womanhood is the courageous and devoted part that he played in the movement for the abolition of *suttee.* He may or may not have been the central figure in that movement, but it must be admitted by all that but for his exertions that in human custom would not have been put down by law so soon it was.

Women's Right to Property

But to prevent the murder of widows was only to create another problem, namely, the amelioration of their condition. It is even now a question as to how we can best better their lot. Many solutions of the problem have been proposed and attempted : their re-marriage, giving them such training as to enable them to lead honourable, useful and independent lives, so changing the Hindu law of inheritance as to make the means of living of Hindu widows less precarious, etc. His *Brief remarks regarding modern encroachments on the ancient rights of females, according to the Hindu law of inheritance* was intended to attain the last object. That the condition of helpless widows deeply touched his heart appears also from No. VI of the *Sambad Kaumudi,* which contained "an appeal to the rich Hindus of Calcutta to constitute a society

for the relief of destitute widows upon the principles of the Civil and Military Widows' Fund established by order of Government."

His Estimate of Women

That he was earnestly in favour of the education of women and did not hold the prevent low opinion of the character of woman, is quite clear from many passages in his writings, such for instance, as the following, taken from his *Second Conference on the Practice of Burning Widows Alive* :

> How then can you accuse them of want of understanding? If, after instruction in knowledge and wisdom, a person cannot comprehend or retain what has been taught him, we may consider him as deficient; but as you keep women generally void of education and acquirements, you cannot, therefore, in justice pronounce on their inferiority. On the contary, Lilavati, Bhanumati, the wife of the prince of Karnat, that of Kalidas are celebrated for their thorough knowledge of all the Shastras; moreover in the *Vrihadaranyaka Upnishad* of the *Yajur Veda* it is clearly stated that Yajnavalkya imparted divine knowledge of the most difficult nature to his wife Maitreyi, who was able to follow and completely attain it!
>
> Secondly, you charge them with want of resolution, at which I feel exceedingly surprised : for we constantly perceive, in a country where the name of death makes the male shudder, that the female, from her firmness of mind, offers to burn with the corpse of her deceased husband; and yet you accuse those women of defficiency in point of resolution.
>
> Thirdly, with regard to their trustworthiness, let us look minutely into the conduct of both sexes, and we may be enabled to ascertain which of them is the most frequently guilty of betraying friends. If we enumerate such women in each village or towns as have been deceived by men, and such men as have been betrayed by women, I presume that the number of the deceived women would be found ten times greater than that of the betrayed men. Men are, in general, able to read and write, and manage public affairs, by which means they easily promulgate such faults as women occasionally commit, but never consider as criminal the misconduct of men towards women. One fault they have, it must

be acknowledged; which is, by considering others equally void of duplicity as themselves, to give their confidence too readily, from which they suffer such misery, even so far that some of them are misled to suffer themselves to be burnt to death.

In the fourth place, with respect to their subjection to the passions, this may be judged of by the custom of marriage as to the respective sexes; for one man may marry two or three, sometimes even ten wives and upwards; while a woman, who marries but one husband, desires at his death to follow him, forsaking all wordly enjoyments, or to remain leading the austere life of an ascetic.

Views on Child-marriage, Polygamy, etc.

It may be safely said that had he lived to return home from England and work here for a few years more, his contact with the comparatively enlightened womanhood of the West would certainly have borne fruit in the establishment of educational institutions for Indian girls and women. That Miss Mary Carpenter came out to India to labour for the good of Indian women is due mainly to her contact with the Raja. Regarding the remarriage of child-widows, his biographer, Babu Nagendranath Chatterjee, says : "We have heard that Rammohun Roy used to express a desire to his friends that the remarriage of child-widows should become prevalent. When he went to England a rumour spread everywhere that on coming back home he would introduce the custom of the remarriage of widows."

It will appear from a study of his *Brief Remarks regarding the Ancient Rights of Females* that he was opposed to polygamy, *Kulinism* and the practical selling of girls in marriage. He showed from the Shastras that second marriages were authorised only under certain circumstances, and observed :

> "Had a Magistrate or other public officer been authorised by the rulers of the empire to receive applications for his sanction to a second marriage during the life a first wife, and to grant his consent only on such accusations as the foregoing being substantiated, the above law might have been rendered effectual, and the distress of the female sex in Bengal, and the number of suicides, would have been necessarily very much reduced".

We have no indication in his works of his views on child-marriage. Perhaps in his days in Bengal, though such marriages must have been customary, their consummation was postponed to a maturer age, thus minizing the evil to some extent, as is still the case in some parts of India. But one can only speculate as to what he would have done had he lived to come back from England. For, a man who had such innate chivalry in his nature that he would never take his seat if any woman of what rank so ever remained standing in his presence, could not have failed to observe the evil effects on women of such a custom.

It is related that he gave his grand-daughter in marriage when she was 15 or 16.

Views on Cast System

That Rammohun Roy had not failed to observe the evil effects of caste will appear from the extract from one of his letters printed below :

> "I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and sub-divisions among them, has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise. . . . It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of political advantages and social comfort."

No. VIII of his Sambad Kaumudi, too, prints the plea of a philanthropist (probably himself) who, observing the misery caused by prejudices of caste, urges the Hindus not to debar themselves thereby from mechanical persuits, but to cultivate "such arts as would tend to their comfort, happiness and independence." By crossing the ocean, dining with Europeans, and in other ways, the Raja, to a great extent, broke through the unreasonable and injurious restrictions imposed by caste. He published with a Bengali translation the first chapter of a Sanskrit work against caste, named *Vajrasuchi*, by Mrityunjayacharyya.

Among the causes of the political subjection of India, he

mentions caste in the following passage taken from the *Brahmunical Magazine* :

> "We have been subjected to such insults for about nine centuries, and the cause of such degradation has been our excess in civilization and abstinence from the slaughter even of animals; as well as our division into castes, which has been the source of want of unity among us."

While civilization produces culture, refinement und sociability, its excess enervates and makes men too mild.

In recent years various means have been suggested for bringing about the fusion of castes and sects by facilitating inter-marriage among them. The means proposed by Rammohun Roy was the adoption of the *Salva* form of marriage prescribed in the following *sloka* of the "Mahanirvana Tantra" :

Vayojati-vicharo'tra S'aivodvahe na vidyte. Asapindam bharttrihinam udvahecchambhus' asanat.

> ' There is no discrimination of age and caste or race in the Saiva marriage. As enjoined by Siva, one should marry a woman who has no husband and who is not '*sapinda*' that is, who is not within the prohibited degrees of marriage."

Rammohun contended that orthodox Hindus ought to consider *Salva* marriages as valid as *Vaidik* marriages. Had his views prevailed, widow-marriage, inter-caste and inter-racial marriage, and post-puberty marriage would all have been considered valid according to Hindu usage.

Pioneer and Promoter of Education

It is well-known that Rammohun Roy himself founded and helped others in founding schools. He took a prominent part in the great educational controversy between the "Orientalists" and the "Anglicists" and sided with the latter. But for his opposition the clamour of the former for the exclusive pursuit of Oriental studies would most probably have prevailed. His *Letter on English Education* to Lord Amherst is a remarkably convincing production.[5] For the direct and indirect beneficial results of

Western education we are indebted to Raja Rammohun Roy as much as to Lord Macaulay, Lord William Bentinck, David Hare and others.

Father of Modern Bengali Prose

Raja Rammohun Roy wrote textbooks in Bengali on Grammar, Geography, Astronomy, and Geometry. He may be considered as practically the father of modern Bengali literacy prose. He taught his people the use of marks of punctuation. There was in his nature a deep vein of genuine poetry too, as his Bengali hymns show. He was the first to write theistic hymns in Bengali. Pandit Ramagati Nyayaratna, a well-known Hindu historian of the Bengali language and literature, truly observes that they appear to possess the power of melting even stony hearts, of making the most irreligious devoted to God and of making hearts sunk in worldliness detached from the world."

The Raja as a Journalist

His Bengali journal, the *Sambad Kaumudi,* first appeared in 1821. He is practically the founder of native journalism in India. The *Sambad Kaumudi*[6] was not exclusively or chiefly a political publication. It, as well as his Persian newspaper, *Mirat ul Akhbar* or Mirror of Intelligence had an educational purpose, too. Besides politics, subjects of a historical, literary and scientific character were treated of therein.[7]

His Legal Writings

Lawyers of eminence have declared that the legal writings of the Raja, such as his *Brief Remarks on Ancient Female Rights, The Rights of Hindus over Ancestral Property according to the Law of Bengal,* would do credit to jurists of the highest standing.[8]

As a Political Reformer

To the public Rammohun Roy is best known as a religious and social reformer. To many he is also known as literateur and educationist. But he is not so well-known as a political reformer and agitator. A brief account of his politics may not therefore be out of place here.

Raja's Love of Freedom

Mr. William Adam, a Baptist Missionary, whose association

with Raja Rammohun Roy led him to adopt Unitarian opinions, bears the following testimony to his love of liberty :

"He would be free or not be at all. . . . Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul, ... freedom not of action merely, but of thought. . . .This tenacity of personal independence, this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment on his mental freeedom was accompanied with a very nice perception of the equal rights of others, even of those who differed most widely from him."

It was this love of liberty that was the source of all his political opinions and the mainspring of all his political activity. It made him take interest in and deeply sympathise with all political movements all over the world that had for their object the advancement of popular freedom. Some instances may here be given of Rammohun's cosmopolitan sympathies in the region of politics.

"When the intelligence reached India that the people of Naples after extorting a constitution from their despotic king were crushed back into servitude by the Austrian troops, in obedience to the joint mandate of the crowned heads of Russia, Austria, Sardinia, and Naples, Rammohun felt it (so) keenly."

That in a letter to Mr. Buckingham, dated August 11, 1821, he wrote :

"I am afraid I must be under the necessity of denying myself the pleasure of your society this evening; more especially as my mind is depressed by the late news from Europe. . . From the late unhappy news I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European colonies, possessed of a greater degree of the same blessing than what they now enjoy."

"Under these cirrcumstances I consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own, and their enemies as ours. Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been, and never will be, ultimately successful."

"These noble words", says Miss Collet, "reveal how profundly Rammohun felt with the Late James Russell Lowell that "In the gain or loss of one race all the rest have equal claim" and that

"Wherever wrong is done
To the humblest and the weakest,
'neath the all-beholding Sun,
That wrong is also done to us."

Rammohun's Persian weekly *Mirut-ul-Akhbar* contained an article on "Ireland, the causes of its distress and discontent." In this he dwelt on the evils of absenteeism and the injustice of maintaining Protestant clergumen out of revenues wrung from the Roman Catholic inhabitants of Ireland. He said :

> How admirable is the observation of Saadi (on whom be mercy !) :
> "Do not say that these rapacious ministers are the well-wishers of his Majesty;
> For in proportion as they augment the revenue of the State, they diminish his popularity;
> O statesmen, apply the revenue of the King towards the comfort of the people;
> Then during their lives they will be loyal to him."

When the news of the establishment of constitutional Government of Spain reached India, he gave a public dinner at the Town Hall.[9] Some months before his departure for England, news reached Calcutta of the latest French Revolution, and, "so great was his enthusiasm that", we are told, "he could think and talk of nothing else." He viewed it as a triumph of liberty and rejoiced accordingly. On his voyage to England he landed at the Cape for only an hour or two. "Returning on board he met with a nasty accident. The gangway ladder had not been properly secured and he got a serious fall, from which he was lame for eighteen months afterwards and indeed never finally recovered. But no bodily suffering could repress his mental ardour. To French frigates, under the revolutionary flag, the glorious tri-colour, were lying in Table Bay, and lame as he was, he would insist on visiting them. The sight of these colours seemed to kindle his enthusiasm, and to render him insensible to pain."

During the days of the Reform Bill agitation in England, he considered the struggle between the reformers and anti-reformers as a "struggle between liberty and tyranny throughout the world; between justice and injustice, and between right and wrong." He publicly avowed that in the event of the Reform Bill being defeated, he would renounce his connection with England.

There are other indications, in his works, of what in our day is known as the spirit of non-co-operation. It is not difficult to believe that, had he lived now, this would have found expression in some movement of national self-assertion.

Attitude Towards Muhammadans

The attitude of Rammohun Roy towards Mussalman rule, society, character and culture was entirely unprejudiced and fraternal. He wore in public dress worn in Muhammadan courts. In his "Judicial system of India", to the question—

> Q. *What is your opinion of the judicial character and conduct of the Hindu and Muhammadan lawyers attached to the courts ?*

He replied :

> A. Among the Muhammadan lawyers I have met with some honest men. The Hindu lawyers are in general not well spoken of, and they do not enjoy much of the confidence of the public.

In the "Condition of India", he writes :

> I have observed with respect to distant cousins, sprung from the same family, and living in the same district, when one branch of the family had been converted to Mussulmanism, that those of the Muhammadan branch living in a freer manner, were distinguished by greater bodily activity and capacity for exertion, than those of the other branch which had adhered to the Hindoo simple mode of life.

Again :

> Q. *What is the state of industry among them ?*
>
> A. The Muhammadans are more active and capable of exertion than the Hindus, but the latter are also generally patient of labour, and diligent in their employments, and those of the Upper Province not inferior to the Muhammadans themselves in industry.

Q. *What capability of improvement do they possess ?*

A. They have the same capability of improvement as any other civilized people.

Q. *What degree of intelligence exists among the native inhabitants ?*

A. The Mussulmans, as well as the more respectable classes of Hindus, chiefly cultivated Persian literature, a great number of the former and a few of the latter also extending their studies likewise to Arabic. This practice has partially continued to the present time, and among those enjoy species of learning, as well as among those who cultivate Sanskrit literature, many well informed and enlightened persons may be found, though from their ignorance of European literature, they are not naturally much esteemed by such Europeans as are not well versed in Arabic and Sanskrit.

Raja's Fight for a free Press in India

Raja Rammohun Roy believed that a free Press is one of the best safeguards of liberty. This conviction found expression in his Petitions against the Press Regulation : (1) to the Supreme Court, and (2) to the King in Council. The Press Ordinance prescribed that thenceforth no one should publish a newspaper or other periodical without having obtained a license from the Governor-General in Council, signed by the Chief Secretary. The memorial submitted to the Supreme Court" "may be regarded as the Areopagitica of Indian History. Alike in diction and in argument, it forms a noble landmark in the progress of English culture in the East."

This Memorial proving fruitless, Rammohun and his coadjutors appealed to the King in Council[10] says Miss Collet :

> "The appeal is one of the noblest pieces of English to which Rammohun put his hand. Its stately periods and not less stately thought, recall the eloquence of the great creators of a century ago. In language and style for ever associated with the glorious vindication of liberty, it invokes against the arbitrary exercise of British power the principles and traditions which are distinctive of British History."

This Memorial too proved unavailing. The Privy Council declined to comply with the petition.

Raja's Demand for Political Rights : The Jury Act of 1827.

A new Jury Act came into operation in the beginning of 1827. On August 17th, 1829, Rammohun wrote to Mr. J. Crawford and entrusted to him petitions against the Act for presentation to both Houses of Parliament, signed by Hindus and Muslims. He thus concisely stated the grounds of grievance :

> "In this famous Jury Bill Mr. Wynn, the late President of the Board of Council, has by introducing religious distinctions into the judicial system of this country, not only afforded just grounds for dissatisfaction among the Natives in general, but has excited much alarm in the breast of every one conversant with political principles. Any Natives, either Hindu or Mohamedan, are rendered by this Bill subject to judicial trial by Christians, either Europeans or Native while Christians including Native converts are exempted from the degradation of being tried either by a Hindu or Mussulman juror, however high he may stand in the estimation of society. This Bill also denies both to Hindus and Mohammedans the honour of a seat in the Grand Jury even in the trial of fellow Hindus or Mussulmans. This is the sum total of Mr. Wynn's late Jury Bill of which we bitterly complain."

Rammohun went on to suggest a possibility "which is by no means so remote now as when he wrote" :

> "Supposing that 100 years hence the Native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirement of general and political knowledge as well as of modern arts and sciences it is possible that they will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectually any unjust and oppressive measures serving to degrade them in the scale of society ? It should not be lost sight of that the position of India is very different from that of Ireland, to any quarters of which an English fleet may suddenly convey a body of troops that may force its way in the requisite direction and succeed in suppressing every effort of a refractory spirit. Were India to share one-fourth of the knowledge and energy of that country, she would prove from her remote situation, her riches and her vast population, either useful and profitable as a

willing province, an ally of British empire or troublesome and annoying as a determined chemy."

The letter quoted above is remarkable for the far-sighted glance into the future which it reveals. Here in germ is to be found the national aspiration which is now breaking forth into demands for self-rule". Rammohun's English biographer Miss Sophia Dobson Collet observes that :

"The prospect of an educated India of an India approximating to European standards of culture seems to have never been long absent from Rammohun's mind; and he did, however vaguely claim in advance for his countrymen the political rights which progress in civilisation inevitably involves. Here again Rammohun stands forth as the tribune and prophet of New India".

Notes and References

1. Miss Sophia Dobson Collet, the Raja's English Biographer, writes "Rammohun made no secret of the theistic passion which ruled his life. A favourite disciple remarked that, whenever he spoke of the Universal Theism, to the advocacy of which he had devoted himself, he was moved even to tears".
2. His habit, in his religions controversies with various sects, of taking his stand not merely upon pure reason but mainly upon pure reason but mainly upon their scriptures led some people to think that he was all things to all men. This, of course, is a mistake. His controversial method was meant to convince the followers of different hiths that even their scriptures, which they professed implicity, to follow; enjoined the worship of the one true God.
3. *The Contemporary Evolution of Religious Thought* by Count Goblet d' Alviella, p. 233.
4. The passage quoted above is from the Trust-deed of the Brahmo Samaj, of which the late Mahadeva Govind Ranade said ; "The spirituality, the deep piety and universal toleration of this document represent an idea of beauty and perfection which may yet take many countries before its full significance is understood by our people."
5. Rammohun's advocacy of modern learning in his letter to Lord Amherst (1832), for "an enlightened system of education embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences", was written 12 years before Macaulay wrote his famous minute (1835). But whereas Rammohun laid emphasis on the teaching of Western sciences,

Macaulay pleaded for the establishment of school "in which the English language might be well and throughly taught."

6. Some of the contents of the earlier numbers of the *Samad Kaumudi* may be given here :

(i) An Appeal to the Government for the establishment of a school for the gratuitous instruction of the poor but respectable Hindus.
(ii) Humble address to the Government soliciting the extension of trial by jury to Mofussil Zila and Provincial Courts of Judicature.
(iii) An appeal to the Government to relieve the Hindu community from the inconvenience consequent upon three being only one Ghaut for the burning of dead bodies whereas an immense space of ground has been granted for the burial of Christians.

Appeal to Government for the prevention of the exportation of the greatest part of the produce of rice from Bengal to foreign ports.

Appeal to Government to enable the middle class of native subjects to avail themselves of the treatment of European physicians.

Appeal to the Calcutta Magistrates to resort to rigorous measures for relieving the Hindu inhabitants of Calcutta from the serious grievances of Christian gentlemen driving their buggies amongst them and cutting and lashing them with whips, without distinction of sex or age, while they quietly assembled in immense numbers to see the images of their deities pass in the Chitpore Road, when many of them through terror and consternation caused by the lashing inflicted on the spectators, fell down into drains, while others were trampled underfoot by the crowd.

7. The contents of the first issue of the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* will prove of interest :

(i) The Editor informs the public that although so many newspapers have been published in this city to gratify their readers, yet there is none in Persian for the information of those who are well versed in that language, and do not understand English particularly the people of Upper Hindustan. He has therefore undertaken to publish a Persian Newspaper every week.
(ii) Government Regulation respecting the period Company's Servants can be absent from their duty on account of their health.
(iii) Difference with China.
(iv) Triol of John Hyes, Esq,, Judge of Tipperan.
(v) Release of prisoners on the 23rd of April, King's Birthday.
(vi) Shipping Intelligence.
(vii) Cause of Enmity between Russia and the Sublime porte.
(viii) Exploits of Rungeet Singh.
(ix) Plentiful crop of corn this year in Hindoostan.
(x) Pair of Elephants for sale.
(xi) Price of Indigo and Opium.
(xii) Proposal sent to inhabitants of Shajuhanabad, by an officer of the Honourable Company, point out the advantages of having an English School instituted in that City, to which however, the Natives paid no attention.

Welcoming editorially the advent of this Persian Weekly started by Rammohun, the *Calcutta Journal* (20th April, 1822, p. 561), of Mr. James Silk Buckingham wrote :

"The Editor is a Brahmin of high rank, a man of liberal sentiments and by no means deficient in loyalty, well versed in the Persian language and possessing a competent knowledge of English : intelligent, with a considerable share of general information and an insatiable thirst after knowledge."

8. The late Sir Gooroodas Benerjee, a judge of the Calcutta High Court and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, in a speech that he delivered as Chairman at Rammohun Roy's Death Anniversary Meeting in 1889, said : "His (Rammohun's) two essays—one on the rights of the Hindoo females and the other the rights of a Hindoo over ancestral property—show at once his deep erudition as a lawyer and his broad views as a jurist; and it is to the latter of these to essays that is due in no small measure the advanced state of the law relating to the free alienability of property in Bengal. The concluding paragraph of that essay is well worthy of Rammohun Roy and will do honour to any lawyer or any jurist in the country. Every one who belong, will perceive here the rudiments of that discussion, which in the writings of Sir Henry Maine, have shed such lustre over his name. And Rammohun Roy was no professional Lawyer."

9. The dinner referred to above was given by the Raja, it appears, on receipt of the news of the successful rising of the Spanish colonies in South America against the authority of Spain. In a letter written apparently by an English friend of the Raja then living in Calcutta and appearing in the issue of the *Edinburgh Magazine* (Constable), for September, 1823, we read :

"But the lively interest he (Rammohun) took in the progress of South American emancipation, eminently marks the grantness and benevolence of his mind, and was created, he said, by the perusal of the detestable barbarities inflicted by Spain to subjugate, and afterwards continued by the Inquisition, to retain in bondage that unhappy country.

'What' ! replied he (upon being asked why he had celebrated by illuminations, by an elegant dinner to about sixty Europeans and by a speech composed and delivered in English by himself at his house in Calcutta, on the arrival of important news of the success of the Spanish patriots), "ought I to be insensible to the sufferings of my fellow-creatures whenever they are, or however unconnected by interests, religion or language ?"

This letter was reproduced in "The Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature," Vol. XVIII, pp. 575-788 and has been unearthed by Mr. Brajendra Nath Banerji, who published it in the *Modern Review* for March 1932.

10. A few passages from this memorable document are reproduced below :

31. Men in power hostile to the liberty of the Press, which is a disagreeable check upon their conduct, when unable to discover any real evil arising from its existence, have attempted to make the world imagine that it

might, in some possible contingency, afford the means of combination against the government, but not to mention that extraordinary emergencies would warrant measures, which in ordinary times are totally injustifiable, your Majesty is well aware, that a Free Press has never yet caused a revolution in any part of the world, because while men can easily represent the grievances arising from the conduct of the local authoritits to the Supreme Government, and thus get them redressed, the grounds of discontent that excite revolution are removed; whereas, where no freedom of the Press existed, and grievances consequently remained unrepresented and unredressed, innumerable revolutions have taken place in all parts of the globe, or if prevented by the armed force of the Government, the people continued ready for insurrection.

36. It is well known that despotic Governments naturally deserve the suppression of any freedom of expression which might tend to expose their acts to the obloque which ever attends the exercise of tyranny or oppression and the argument they constantly resort to is, that the spread of knowledge is dangerous to the existence of all legitimate authority, since, as the people became enlightened, they will discover that by a unity of effort, the many may easily shake off the yoke of the few and thus become emancipated from the restraints of power altogether, forgetting the lesson derived from history, that in countries which have made the smallest advance in civilisation anarchy and revolution are most prevalent, while on the other hand, in nations the most enlightened any revolt against government, which have guarded inviolate the rights of the governed, is most rare, and that the resistance of a people advanced in knowledge, has ever been—not against the existence,—but against the abuses of the governing power Canada, during the late war with America, afforded a memorable instance of the truth of. this argument. The enlightened inhabitants of that colony, finding that their rights and privileges had been secured to them, their complains listened to and their grievances redressed by the British Government, resisted every attempt of the United States to seduce them from their allegiance to it. In fact, it may be fearlessly averred, that the more enlightened a people became, the less likely are they to revort against the governing power, as long as it is exercised with justice tempered with mercy, and the rights and privileges of the governed are held sacred from any invasion.

11. That Rammohun looked upon the British domination of India as a period of political tutelage, will be amply born out by what he said (29th June, 1828) to Mr Victor Jacquemont, the French man who has left his impressions of India, in his *Voyage Dans L'Inde* (Paris, 1841) :—"India requires many more years of English domination so that she might not have many things to lose while she is reclaiming her political independence." [See Mr. N.C. Chaudhuri's translation of the interview in the *Modern Review* for June, 1926].

28

RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY—A PIONEER IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL REGENERATION OF INDIA

S.R. BAKSHI

Raja Ram Mohun Roy has been called the 'Pole Star' of Indian awakening; 'the Prometheus of 19th century India,' 'the Erasmus of the Indian Reformation' and 'the inaugurator of the New Age.' Mahatma Gandhi regarded him as one of the greatest reformers of his time and father of advanced liberal thought in Hinduism. He may fully be called a "barrier-breaker' who laid the foundation of a grand national edifice, broad issued on freedom and equality. His activities embraced various spheres of life and everywhere he paved a new way for the future generation of Indians to follow. All the principal movements of the 19th century —social, religious, political and educational, originated with him. None of these governments, in fact, can be studied and understood without a reference to the part played by him.

EARLY CAREER

The Raja was born in a well-to-do and respectable Brahman family on May 22, 1772, in Radhanagar, in Arambag sub-division of Hooghly district. His ancestors had enjoyed positions of trust and responsibility under the Nawabs of Murshidabad. He learnt Persian in a Pathshala under a Maulvi. Later on, he studied the Koran in Patna, where he was very much influenced by the Sufi

philosophy. While in his teens, he joined the service of the East Indian Company as a Revenue Officer in the Department of Revenue. As he was very much fond of studies, he snatched some hours from his official duties for a thorough duly of modern Tantric work. Soon he became well conversants with the doctrines of Hinduism, Boddhism, Jainism and Islam which greatly helped him to develop and mature his own religious views and principles.

MISSIONARY ZEAL

After his retirement from the service of the East India Company in 1815, Raja Ram Mohun Roy settled in Calcutta. His arrival in Calcutta marks the actual beginning of his public life. He was forty-two years of age, mature and well-prepared for the great work that lay before him—the task of arousing India from her state of lethargy and making her conscious of her dormant powers. He founded the Atmiya Sabha or Fiendly Association for discussing subjects concerning theology and the prevailing social evils. Ram Mohun Roy's outright condemnation of these evils caused a stir in Hindu society which began to level trenchant criticism against him. Besides, his enemies spared no pains to lower him in public estimate. But the Raja remained quite firm and steadfast in his mission. He said to the people of India, 'If you remain separate one from the other, if you are divided in your own home, if you are like a boat whose planks are all riven as under, how shall you give potency to the message of India to the world ? If there are those whom you look down upon, how shall they became your own ? If there are those whom you will not touch, how will you hold them in your embrace ? If you are afraid, how can you conquer your enemy ? If you are untrue yourself, how shall you be the evangelist of truth ?' This is the message he gave to India.

HIGHER TARGETS

Though born and bred in the British period, Raja Ram Mohun Roy was a man of different mould. A firm believer in the Divine unity of mankind, he had, at heart, a deeply religious nature which was permeated with the Divine Spirit. He used to tell the people that at least for the sake of freedom for India, they should cultivate

the spirit of true brotherhood and do away with cast prejudices which divide the orthodox Hindus into so many water-tight compartments. His publications, *viz.*, 'The Percepts of Jesus' and the 'Guide to Peace and Happiness' involved him into a severe religious controversy with the Christian missionaries of Serampore who took serious offence at his interpretation of Christianity, vehemently criticized him in their periodical 'Friend of India' and called him a heathen. In the course of this heated controversy, the stalwart missionary like Dr. Marshman often lost his temper and attacked him and Hinduism intemperately. This, of course, created an atmosphere seething with suspicion and hate. But Raja Ram Mohun Roy remained calm and cool, replied to these criticisms very convincingly in a number of tracts and burst asunder the meshes of sophistry.

Raja Ram Mohun Roy realized that his message was very necessary to raise Indians from the quagmire of superstitions. In the interest of the solidarity of religions from the social point of view, he founded the Brahmo Samaj as a society of the worshippers of one God of all religions and all humanity. The worshippers might belong each to his own religious fold—Saivaite or Vaishnavite, Vedantist—in theory, he might be Christian or Muslim, Jew or Jaina, anybody could join in the prayers and no one was expected to depart from his own religious tradition. The meetings of the Sabha were held every Saturday evening and Vedas were recited by Brahamans and Upanishadic texts were read and later explained in Bengali. This was followed by a sermon and singing of hymns. Soon the Brahmo Samaj attracted a large number of influential and educated persons under whose gaidance and patronage the work of social reform was undertaken.

PIONEERING WORK

Deeply interested in social and religious reforms, Raja Ram Mohun Roy initiated a number of social reform movements. He conclusively demonstrated that social and religious reforms were the very foundation of political advancement and opined that enemies of liberty and friends of depotism had never been and now would be, ultimately successful. The cause of women found in him a great champion. If women of Bengal at the time were living under the most abject form of social slavery. As many as 309 widows were burnt alive in 1828, the year in which the

Brahmo Samaj was established Ram Mohun's own hatred for the custom had an emotional as well as an intellectual basis, his own sister-in-law having been a victim of Suttee. It was but natural that the misery and degradation womanhood should have strongly appealed the sympathetic heart of Raja Ram Mohun Roy. He was so oppressed with sense of pain at the inhuman practice of the burning of widows that he used to visit the cremation grounds to agree with the parties and to prevent such deeds, possible. He proved from the authoritarian standards of Hinduism that Suttee we not a religious duty. He did more than think. He showed that not religious devotion, but the avaricious desire of relatives to avoid the cost of supporting the widow, had a great deal to do with the perpetuation of Suttee. Its suppression would therefore, do no wrong to the faith which British honour had pledged itself to tolerate and respect. The principles of humanity and of religious liberty no longer clashed. The atrocity could consistent be put down.

Lord William Bentinck cut the Gordian Knot and on the 4th of December, 1829, the Regulative was passed which declared the practice illegal and punishable as a criminal offence. All persons convinced of aiding and abetting in the sacrifice of a Hindu widow, whether she were a willing victim or not. were pronounced guilty of culpalk homicide, and where violence or other means of over-powering the victims' will were employed, the death sentence might, at the discretion of the Court, be inflicted. Suttee was abolished, and the reputation of the British Government and the fair name of religion itself were redeemed from one of the foulest stains. He thus largely succeeded in eliminating this evil from the Hindu society : Besides, polygamy, early marriage, killing of female children, throwing of the first child into the holy river, etc., were some of the most dreadful and inhuman practices performed in the different parts of the country in varying degrees. These social evils pricked his noble heart and made him wage an incessant war against them all through his life. He fought fearlessly against ignorance, superstition, decadence, degeneration, narrowness and sectarianism and ended stagnation in different spheres of life. He stirred the country to thought and action and thus proved himself instrumental in laying the foundation of the 'true League of Nations in a League of National Cultures.'

VOTARY OF ENGLISH

Raja Ram Mohan Roy felt that such a degraded situation in which ignorance produced polytheism, Suttee and other customs repugnant to an intelligent man with enlightened religious conceptions, could be corrected only by education. The spread of education in India, therefore, became a passion with Ram Mohun Roy. He was always eager to discuss the topic with friends and acquaintances. He is known to have co-operated ethusiastically with the Calcutta Book Society (est. 1817) in the latter body's efforts to help the cause of education by publishing suitable text-books. The third report of the society's proceedings mention that Ram Mohun wrote a text-book on Geography in Bengali and English and submitted it to the society for publication. Ram Mohun's first venture in education centered about the Hindu College which he and David Hare had conceived of about 1816. (This institution when fully developed was formally named the 'Anglo-Indian College,' though it continued to be popularly known as the 'Hindu College'). But in order that it might receive the support of orthodox Hindus, Ram Mohun Roy had been forced to sever his connection with it. As early as 1816, therefore, he bounded an English school of his own at Suripara. Here boys were instructed free in the elementary subjects, and later a class for advanced students was added. Finally, a plot of ground was purchased at Simla, and the 'Anglo-Hindu-School' came into its own premises in 1822. He was the pioneer of English education in India. In 1823, when, on the recommendations of a Committee appointed by Lord Amherst, a college was established in Calcutta for the teaching of Sanskrit, he protested against its establishment and demanded instead that it might be utilised for imparting a liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences through the medium of English. His aim was to propagate the New Learning of the West and the social, political and scientific culture embodied in it. Later on, his views culminated into the famous controversy between the Anglicists and the Orientalists on the question of the educational policy to be pursued by the Government. He, himself, was a great scholar and for his thorough knowledge of Persian and Islamic philosophy, he was called a 'Zabardast Maulvi.' He also knew Greek and Hebrew languages. He was a careful student of Law, Jurisprudence,

Upanishadas, Puranas and Tantras. He and his great friend, David Hare, took the initiative in the foundation of the Hindu College at Calcutta for imparting education in science and literature of Europe.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMMES

Raja Ram Mohun Roy exhibited remarkable capacity as a writer. He wielded a powerful pen and always used it for noble causes. His pen was not confined to one language : Sanskrit, Bengali, Persian, Arabic and last, but though not the least English, all came within its range. Moreover, his efforts for promoting Indian journalism were very notable. Among the papers which he used as the expression of his thoughts was the Bengali weekly 'Sambad Kaumudi' or The Moon of Intelligence.

The remarkable career of Raja Ram Mohun Roy's superhuman activities came to a close with his visit of Europe. The immediate object of his visit was to plead before the authorities of the East India Company—the case of the ex-Emperor of Delhi who had entrusted the mission to him as his ambassador. His other objects were, first, to defeat the attempts for a repeal of the anti-Suttee decree and secondly, to be present in England during the debates on the East India Company's Charter. He gave his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the revenue and judicial systems of India and presented petitions to the said House in the matter of the abolition of the Sati rites. He said to the people abroad, 'Come to India'. She is still the hostess, broken though she be, plundered though she be by every kind of foreign exploitation, including your own exploitation, you people of the West, you are nonetheless 'welcome within the borders of my home.'

IMPRESSIVE FIGURE

In September 1833, Raja Ram Mohun Roy visited Bristol at the urgent invitation of his Unitarian friends with a view to giving his fatigued constitution a much-needed rest prior to his return home. But within a few days of his arrival there, he was attacked with a fatal malady which, terminated his noble career on 27th of September, 1833. Miss Hare, the niece of his friend Mr. David

Hare, who attended on him during his last moments, has recorded that he finally closed his lips with the word, 'Om' the well-known Vedic syllable, meaning the Supreme Being. His mortal remains now rest in Arno's Vale at Bristol over which Dwarkanath Tagore built a beautiful mausoleum with most befitting tributes which are as follows : 'Beneath this stone rests the remains of Raja Ram Mohun Roy. A conscientious and steadfast believer in the unity of the God-head, he consecrated his life with entire devotion to the worship of Divine Spirit alone. To great natural talents, he united a thorough mastery of many languages and early distinguished himself as one of the greatest scholars of the day. His unwearied labours to promote the social, moral and physical condition of the people of India, his earnest endeavours to suppress idolatry and Sati-rite and his constant zealous, advocacy of whatever tended to advance the glory of God and welfare of man live in the grateful remembrance of his countrymen. This tablet records the sorrow and pride with which his memory is cherished by his descendants.'

Lord William Bentinck remained to the last a great admirer of Ram Mohun. He donated a sum of rupees five hundred to the Ram Mohun Memorial Fund when the death news of the Indian reformer came to Calcutta. During his life time, he was probably more esteemed by the Occidental than by the Oriental World. Today, however, the situation has been reversed. Now, practically he is being acclaimed as 'the Father of Modern India', and his life-long labours to promote the glory of the God-head and the welfare of man will ever remain an immortal chapter in the annals of the modern India. The standard of revolt he thus raised against the medieval tyranny of dogma unleashed forces which created what may be called Modern India, and makes him worthy to rank by the side of Bacon and Luther.

29

IN DEFENCE OF RAMMOHUN ROY

D.P. DAS

Dr. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, an eminent historian of India, has been at war with a section of Indian historians which considers Raja Rammohun Roy as the leading pioneer of the Indian renaissance. He opened his attack many years ago in his lectures on the 19th century Bengal at the Viswa Bharati. His last salvo was fired on 28 October 1972 in the campus of the University of Kurukshetra where he delivered the presidential address to the Indian History Conference. The substantive part of his address as reported by the *Statesman* is as follows :

> He cited the example of how the role of Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the Indian Renaissance of the 19th century was being distorted and eulogised out of all proportion. He was given credit for the introduction of English education, initiation of social reforms and creation of Bengali prose literature 'though there is clear and conclusive evidence' to show that in these fields 'Ram Mohan has no claim to be pioneer as he has many predecessors'. Likewise, some of his admirers attribute the abolition of the practice of *sati* to Ram Mohan Roy when 'the fact is that when Lord William Bentinck decided to stop the cruel practice he consulted, among others, Ram Mohan Roy who gave his definite opinion against the proposed legislation.[1]

Dr. Majumdar's assertions are serious : he denies the pioneering role of Ram Mohan Roy in the fields of English education, social reforms and Bengali prose literature. With reference to the social reforms, Dr. Majumdar seeks to prove his point by analysing the role of the Raja of Radhanagar in the abolition of *sati.*

Secondly, Dr. Majumdar castigates those modern historians who have overrated the Raja of Radhanagar and have 'eulogised' him out of all proportion.

Dr. Majumdar is not a young aspiring member of a historical society seeking public attention by sheer bravado. He is the living embodiment of the old-style historians who have earned fame and recognition by dint of hard work and intensive research. Addressing his audience, he said solemnly : 'How many of us, with a clean conscience, are prepared to repeat what a great historian said after concluding his book : 'I have not knowingly and without earnest investigation written anything which is not true.'[2] These lofty words of the historian Niebuhr marked the tone of Dr. Majumdar's speech at the Indian History Conference at the Kurukshetra University.

Dr. Majumdar's concern for historical truth is quite evident. It is therefore necessary to pay him due attention when he debunks a person whom so far we have been accustomed to regard as the father of modern India and also when he criticises the fraternity of historians of which he himself is the doyen. One cannot just ignore him.

Dr. Majumdar believes that Raja Rammohun Roy did not play any pioneering role in the introduction and advancement of western liberal education in India. It is common knowledge that English education in India was first introduced by the European missionaries, whose work was later supplemented by the private efforts of eminent British civilians in the employ of the East India Company. The Danish Missionaries began their educational experiments as early as 1706, in the province of Madras; the Danish Mission in Serampore (the famous trio—Carey, Ward and Marshman) contributed a great deal in stimulating the response to western education in India.

Right upto the first three decades of the 19th century the East India Company was dominated by the Orientalists who had little sympathy for those interested in introducing western liberal

education in India. Therefore, all educational activities of the Company were devoted to the study of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit.

In Bengal, the leading part in the spread of English education was taken by the missionaries and individual Englishmen like David Hare, ably assisted by Raja Rammohun Roy. The founding of the Hindu College—a landmark in the development of western liberal education in India—was a result of the joint efforts of the Indians and Englishmen who loved India. Rammohun's association with founding of the college has now been questioned. Dr. Majumdar has stated that the Raja was not associated with the founding of the college in 1816. The main document relied upon by him is the letter of Sir Hyde East, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Calcutta (18 May, 1816) to his friend and brother Judge, Mr. Harrington. Sir Hyde wrote that a Brahmin of Calcutta had met him regarding the establishment of a school on the western model and that many Bengalis of rank and wealth were prepared to donate funds for it. Sir Hyde became a patron and a meeting took place in his house on 14 May, 1816. As the conservative sections of the Hindu community objected to his participation, Raja Rammohun Roy stayed away from the meeting. But who was the Hindu Brahmin who had met Sir Hyde at his residence in the beginning of May 1816 ? Dr. Majumdar is firmly of the view that this Brahmin was not the Raja of Radhanagar but Baidyanath Mukherji, a well-known citizen of Calcutta.[3] In the meeting held at Sir Hyde's house, a sum of nearly Rupees 50,000 was subscribed and promises of more funds were received.

Assuming that for some reason Rammohun could not attend the meeting in May 1816, can it be said that he had no role in the promotion of western liberal education in the country ? Dr. Majumdar is aware of the fact that very soon after the founding of the Hindu College, the Raja of Radhanagar established his own school in Calcutta.[4] It is indeed strange that a historian of Dr. Majumdar's eminence should on the basis of this 'evidence' alone deny Rammohun Roy his just claim to be a pioneer of western liberal education in India.

On 11 December, 1823, Rammohun Roy wrote his famous letter to Lord Amherst in which he pleaded for the cause of western liberal education in preference to the old and traditional Indian system. This was to mark a significant episode in Rammohun's life. He wrote in his memorial :

> But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments and other apparatus. . . . In representing this subject to your Lordship, I conceive myself discharging a solemn duty which I owe to my countrymen.[5]

I shall now take up the role of Raja Rammohun Roy in the abolition of *sati*. Dr. Majumdar says that the Raja of Radhanagar displayed extreme lack of zeal when eventually Bentinck decided to abolish *sati*.

Raja Rammohun Roy's polemical tracts in support of the abolition of *sati* (the first was published in 1818 and the second, two years later) were the first Indian attempt to draw Indian and British attention to the the grisly and cruel practice. The memorial Rammohun wrote to the Marchioness of Hastings imploring her to help the cause of Indian women is one of the most poignant petitions written by him :

> These [burning of widows and other forms of repression] are facts occurring everyday, and not to be denied. What I lament is that, seeing the women thus dependant and exposed to every misery, you feel for them no compassion that might exempt them from being tied down and burnt to death.[6]

Rammohun's efforts did not yield the expected result during the time of Lord Amherst. With the arrival of Lord Bentinck in 1828, there was a decisive change in policy. Lord Hastings and Lord Amherst and almost all of their predecessors had been opposed to the custom but refrained from taking any decisive action as they were apprehensive that this might lead to civil unrest. In his letter to Lord Bentinck, Lord Hastings wrote from England that in his time as the Governor-General he tolerated this 'horrid superstition' because the prospect of eradicating it looked 'distinctly perilous' without a real concurrence on the part of the sepoys of the Bengal Army.[7] Amherst had quite emphatically written to the Court in England that 'apprehension of evils infinitely

greater than those arising from the practice [*of sati*]' induced him to tolerate.[8]

Bentinck joined his post on 4 July, 1829 and immediately after his arrival he busied himself with this problem. Exactly five months later, on December 4 Regulation XVII was enacted which declared 'the practice of Suttee illegal and punishable by the Criminal courts.'[9]

What was Rammohun's role in this decisive move by Bentinck ? During the five months preceding the enactment of Regulation XVII, Bentinck consulted many persons as to what should be done to put a stop to the practice of *sati*. Rammohun and H.H. Wilson urged upon him to exercise caution. Herein lies the gravest charge of Dr. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar. Dr. Majumdar has based his accusation on the facts disclosed in the minute of Lord Bentinck dated 8 November, 1829. Bentinck wrote :

> I must acknowledge that a similar opinion [as that of the famous Orientalist, Horace Wilson] as to the probable excitation of deep distrust of our future intentions was mentioned to me in conversation by that enlightened native, Ram Mohan Roy, a warm advocate for the abolition of Sati and of all other superstitions and corruptions engrafted on the Hindu religion, which he considers originally to have been a pure Deism. It was his opinion that the practice might be suppressed quietly and unobservedly by increasing the difficulties and by the indirect agency of the police. He apprehended that any public enactment would give rise to general apprehension, that the reasoning would be, 'While the English were contending for power they deemed it politic to allow universal toleration and to respect our religion, but having obtained the supremacy their first act is a violation of their profession, and next will probably be, like the Muhammadan conquerors, to force upon them their own religion.[10]

There is no denying the fact that Rammohun asked the Governor-General to go slow and that Bentinck had also appreciated his point of view. The doubts expressed by the Raja are similar to those that had assailed all the Governors-General before Bentinck. All of them had wanted to eradicate the evils but were

not certain of the native reaction. They followed a policy of caution, being haunted by a fear that it might lead to unrest and mutiny in the Bengal army. But once Rammohun was sure that the British Governor-General really meant business he shook his vacillations and doubts away. On 16 January, 1830, he wrote his famous letter to Bentinck thanking him for 'rescuing us forever from the gross stigma hitherto attached to our character as wilful murderers of females, and zealous promoters of the practice of suicide.[11]

In order to preserve the Hindu right of perpetuating *sati*, the orthodox Bengalis of Calcutta founded the Dharma Sabha. They registered their protest to Bentinck on 14 January, 1830 in the form of a memorial. They pleaded that the Government should not put a 'stop to the practice of performing Suttee, an interference with the religion and customs of the Hindus, which we most earnestly deprecate, and cannot view without the most serious alarm. . . .' The memorialists further assured Bentinck that the widow accompanying the husband in the funeral pyre would attain virtue of the same degree as that of Arundhati and enjoy the happiness of heaven for a period not below thirty-five million years.[12]

Bentinck was not impressed by the arguments of the memorialists. He advised them to approach the King-in-Council.[13] They sent a petition to the British Government appealing to the British conscience to uphold the cause of Hindu religion. Rammohun Roy also reached England in April 1831, carrying with him a counter-memorial in support of the abolition of *sati*. Unfortunately for the Dharma Sabha of Calcutta, the Privy Council rejected its petition in July 1832.

Dr. Majumdar denies to Rammohun Roy the credit given to him by posterity only on the basis of the doubts that the Raja had once expressed to Bentinck on the eve of the adoption of the Regulation of 1829. However, Rammohun's role before and after 4 December, 1829 shows how unfair Dr. Majumdar is in his assessment. On 26 November, 1829, before the Regulation was announced, an English lady, Mrs. Frances Keith Martin wrote to the Editor of *Bengal Harkaru* asking the people not to forget 'the powerful though unacknowledged aid of the great Hindu philosopher Ram Mohun Roy'. She wrote further that the people should :

never cease to remember the glowing sympathy, intelligence, and fearless energy displayed through a course of eighteen years by their great and at length successful advocate, Ram Mohun Roy.[14]

Two days later, *Bengal Harkaru* wrote editorially :

Let us therefore not offer our exclusive praise and gratitude either to Ram Mohun Roy or to Lord William Bentinck. The former would never have succeeded in his patriotic and enlightened labours without the co-operation of the latter, nor would Lord Bentinck have ventured on so desirable a measure, if the minds of the natives had not been prepared to abandon the worst superstitions, by the unwearied labours of their distinguished countryman.[15]

Rammohun Roy came to Calcutta in 1814, after retiring from service in the East India Company. He left for England in 1820. The six years that he lived in Calcutta and the remaining two that he passed in England were full of varied activities in public service. I have spoken only of his efforts in the promotion of liberal western education and the eradication of the practice of *sati*. The other aspects of his work were as colourful as they were multifarious, covering a wide range extending from feminism to the foundation of a monotheistic faith. It is not necessary to enter into the details of these activities. Suffice it to say that the Raja of Radhanagar displayed a mind which was far ahead of his time. He lived in an age when Hinduism was supposed to sanction the murder of widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands, when *kulin* Brahmins provided the worst examples of insensate and insensible polygamy, when female infanticide was a part of life in northern India, and when *thugs* were busy in strangling travellers on the highways throughout our country. It was at this time that he spoke in favour of female inheritance, female education and placing women on a high pedestal of respectability. His love of liberty and human dignity was evident in the memorials and petitions he submitted to the various Governors-General. The Hamilton incident in Bhagalpore marked a significant phase in his public life. His memorial in 1823, to secure the freedom of the press in India has not lost its relevance even today. The concepts of liberty, equality

and fraternity found expression in all the public activities of Raja Rammohun Roy. And the months in England from his arrival in Liverpool in April 1931 to his death in September 1833, were packed with hope and anxiety. His evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the revenue and judicial systems in India and the presentation of the counter-petition to Parliament on the question of *sati*, etc. were significant events of this period.

Dr. Majumdar is every critical of the historians for their propensity to be awayed from the path of faithful investigation of historical truth on account of their ideological predilection and petty prejudices. I do not think that there can be any difference of opinion on this as an issue of general importance. The trouble arises only when he cites as an example the treatment given by historians to the life and career of Raja Rammohun Roy in the history of modern India.

Dr. Majumdar accuses other historians of lavishing disproportionate praise on the Raja. One would therefore expect that at least his own record would be free from the kind of blemish he finds in others.

Dr. Majumdar has himself written earlier, 'The new spirit of this age is strikingly illustrated by the life and career of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a remarkable personality. . . . Ram Mohan's views stirred Hindu society to its depths. . . .'[16] 'Ram Mohan was a great pioneer of English education. . . . In the field of Indian politics also Raja Ram Mohan was the prophet of the new age.'[17] Approvingly quoted an English biographer of Ram Mohan, 'a tribune and prophet of New India. . . . He embodies a new spirit . . . . represents a most instructive and inspiring study for the new India of which he is the type.'[18]

In his *History of the Freedom Movement*, Dr. Majumdar says : Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first and the best representative of this new spirit of rational enquiry into the basis of religion and society. The standard of revolt he thus raised against the medieval tyranny of dogma unleashed forces which created what may be called Modern India, and makes him worthy to rank by the side of Bacon and Luther.'[19]

Exactly the same words were repeated by him two years later in 1965, in volume 10 of the *History and Culture of the Indian People*, p. 92 (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay). Dr. Majumdar

wrote further: 'It is not mere accident that Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who introduced rationalistic principles in social and religious ideas, was also a pioneer of political reforms in modern India.'[20]

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14. *Ibid.*, p. 151
15. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
16. Majumdar, Dutta & Roychoudhuri, *An Advanced History of India*, Macmillan, p. 812. This particular chapter was written by Dr. Majumdar.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 813.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 814-15.
19. R.C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Calcutta, p. 291.
20. R.C. Majumdar, *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 10, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, p. 94.

30

RAMMOHUN – A TRIBUTE

J.L. Das

Raja Rammohun Roy was born (on May 22, 1772) in the latter half of the eighteenth century when the miasma of ignorance and superstition, the cloud of bigotry and obscurantism, and the slough of despondency and helplessness had enveloped the country. Many of the age-old customs of the Hindus had degenerated into tyrannical rituals, and they were fumbling in the dark. With the decay of the Mughal Empire the Muslim community became withdrawn, brooding over past glories, under the protective shade of the Union Jack, which followed the English "shopkeepers" to the East, the overzealous Christian missionaries sought to fill in the resultant vacuum in India's cultural life. Not only was our political freedom usurped, but our moral values were also sought, subtly, to be tempered with. The emergence of Rammohun at such a critical time saved the soul of the country. As has been aptly remarked by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, "Faced with the menace of being swallowed up by a new religion and a new culture, the soul of the people revolted. The first visible embodiment of this revolt was Raja Rammohun Roy and the movement of which he was the father was the Brahmo Samaj movement. Rammohun Roy stood out as the apostle of a religious revival. He urged a return to the original principles of Vedantism and for a total rejection of all the religious and social impurities that had crept into Hinduism in later times. He also advocated an all-round regeneration of the social and national life and the acceptance of all that is useful and beneficial in the modern life of Europe. Raja Rammohun Roy,

therefore, stands out against the dawn of the new awakening in India as the prophet of the new age." (The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942).

According to Standford Arnot, Rammohun's secretary in England, he was "acquainted more or less with ten languages". In fact, however, he was conversant with a few more—Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Bengali, English, Hebrew, Latin, French, Greek, Pali, Spanish, Italian and Tibetan. Although Rammohun had delved deep into classical languages and philosophies of the East, yet he was the first cultured Indian to advocate the introduction of science-oriented Western methods of learning through the medium of English. He considered this essential to enable India to emerge out of her narrow, antiquated grooves and take her rightful place in the new civilization that had come with the impact of the West. In course of his correspondence with Lord Amherst in 1823, he wrote, " . . . . But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and providing a college turmshea with necessary books, instruments and other apparatus." In this connection, it should be noted that the Hindu College established in Calcutta in 1817 was really the work of Rammohun and his friends David and Sir Edward. But, a proposal to include Rammohun in the Board of Directors of the College was turned down as a result of stubborn opposition from some very orthodox, influential Hindus. A Bengal lampoon of the day ran thus :

[The Brahmin of Khanakul (Rammohun was born near this place) has set up a school that threatens to cut at the roots of caste.]

Indeed, for his pioneering efforts at educational and social reforms, Rammohun was not simply ridiculed by a section of his countrymen, but even threatened with assassination. But that did not deter the real Raja among the people, Raja Rammohun Roy, from carrying on a relentless struggle for the eradication of such social evils as "suttee", the inhuman practice of burning a widow at the funeral pyre of her deceased husband, polygamy, infanticide, the caste system, etc. He also supported widow remarriage and the

right of inheritance of Hindu women. The practice of "suttee" was abolished in the December 1839 under a Regulation enacted by Lord Bentinck the then Governor-General in Council.

Though Rammohun's name is not mentioned in the above eulogy yet and several other noble deeds of his have given him an immortality to fame. He might rightly be called the father of Indian journalism. He was the power and inspiration behind the bringing out of the earliest Bengali newspaper, "Bangla Gazettee," 1816, "Sambad Kaumudi" (Bengali), 1821, "Mirat-ul-Akbar" (Persian), 1822, "Jam-i-Jahan-Numa" (Urdu, later Persian), "Bengal Herald" (English-Bengali-Hindustani-Persian), 1829. Because of free, frank and fearless expression of his views, Rammohun soon invited the ire of the powers that be upon himself. In course of his Minutes recorded on 10th October, 1822 on vernacular Press, Mr. W.B. Bailey of the Supreme Council referred in particular to the objectionable editorials appearing in the Mirat-ul-Akbar. Accoding to Raja Rammohun Roy's friend, John Adam, "He (Rammohun) would be free or not be at all. Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his oral—freedom not of action merely but of thought." Rammohun took up the gauntlet when on 14th March 1823 Mr. Adam, the Acting Governor-General, promulgated the notorious Press Ordinance seeeking to curb the freedom of the Press through the introduction of the licensing system. He firmly believed that robbing the Press of its independence was tantamount to depriving the people of their fundamental rights. So he submitted a petition to the Supreme Court against this pernicious measure. It being rejected, the undaunted and indefatigable Rammohun addressed an "Appeal to the King in Council" in England. Unfortunately, it met with a similar face. However, Rammohun's sincere efforts did not go in vain. For, in September 1835, i.e., two years after his death. Sir Charles Metcalfe waived the restriction on the Press. Thus, we might say that the Raja received posthumous recognition for his yeoman's services in this regard.

Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal designated Rammohun the Universal Man and remarked that he was the first Indian to have inflamed the mind of India with the message of the French Revolution and the light it spread to remove the darkness of the Middle Ages. When on his way to England by sea he sighted two French firigates under the revolutionary flag, the glorious tricolour, he cried

out in excitement "Glory, glory, glory to France !" "Rammohun's 'cosmopolitan sympathies' in the political sphere is further illustrated by the joyous enthusiasm with which he had welcomed the news of the liberation of the Spanish colonies of South America from the tyranny of Spain. He celebrated the occasion by entertaining a number of his European friends at a dinner party at his Calcutta residence." (The Life and Teachings of Raja Rammohun Roy by Sophia Dobson Collet.) Rammohun was a strong champion of the Irish Catholics and also of the Reform Bill, then on the floor of the House of Commons. When the Bill was at last passed he gave vent to his jubilation thus in a latter to William Rathbone, "I can now feel proud of being one of your fellow-subjects, and hereby rejoice that I have infinite happiness of witnessing the salvation of your nation, may, of the whole world."

It was Raja Rammohun Roy who initiated the transition of medieval India into modern India. Unfortunately, several evil forces, external and internal, are hovering in India's firmament now. I am, therefore, inclined at this critical moment to implore after Rabindranath :

O Rammohun, after a hundred years
all the greetings of the land have,
this day, in your name mingled.
Pierce the screen of death
and bestow your bounty boundless,
and in all that's decayed and decrepit
new life infuse,
May the touchstone of your heart
usher peerless awakening and strength
in all that's steeped in ignorance.*

*Translated by J.L. Das.

said. The fact that he wrote a booklet in Persian and Arabic supporting monotheism when he was about twelve years old, makes him a rare prodigy; and his translations of the major Upanishads into English and Bengali assure him a place among the great scholars of the world. Jeremy Bentham was amazed at the excellence of the Raja's style of English and Robert Owen thought he would have been an equal of Erasmus had he been born a European. Raja Rammohun Roy was such a great lover of liberty and freedom that he threw a great party to celebrate the liberation of the Spanish colonies of South America He also rushed up at such break neck speed to see the French Tri-colour flag flying from the masts of some French ships when he was travelling by sea to England, that he fell down and broke his leg. So, if he were born in 1774 instead of in 1772 it would add no fresh lustre to his memory nor make it less luminous.

The scholars who have taken upon themselves the noble task of saving the nation from making a terrible mistake relating to the date of birth of Raja Rammohun Roy would have been welcomed as date maniacs had they restricted their efforts to date finding only. But unfortunately they also put in little malicious touches here and there in their speeches and paragraphs to prove that Raja Rammohun Roy was not such a great scholar or social reformer as his admirers thought. If malice is allowed free play then it might be said that so and so are not such great historians or critics of social history as they are supposed to be. But we do not like to be malicious even with the malicious. Noblesse oblige is our motto; and let all pretenders survive in mock glory in this world of pretensions. Yet let it be clearly understood that the world of merit is quite apart from the world of false claims. Raja Rammohun Roy was far above all these pseudos and we must not allow useless assertions to even remotely cloud our vision of the great man who was the founder of modern India in every field of life, so to speak. In introducing modern education in India with the idea of allowing science to have full scope in stimulating social progress; along with reviving the study of our philosophical classics as an anti-dote to blind faith in rituals or fanatical attachment to materialistic jargon, Raja Rammohun Roy created an intellectual balance which was amazing for that period of history. He synthesised religious thoughts of the Christians, the Muslims and the Hindu sects in a manner which made it possible for people to

think constructively about unity in diversity in the field of religious belief. The movement that the Raja initiated in the sphere of religious thought accommodated all monotheistic ideas as found in different religious texts.

The standard biography of Raja Rammohun Roy is the one that was begun by Miss Sophia Dobson Collet and was finished after her death by the Rev. F. Herbert Stead and published by Mr. Harold Collet in 1900 from London. *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy*, as the book was named, was based on the immense mass of material collected very carefully by Miss Collet. In Chapter I of the book the first line gives Rammohun's date of birth as "1772, May 22". It may be assumed that Miss Collet made very careful enquiries before she fixed the Raja's birthday. The idea that Raja Rammohun Roy was born in 17th or the 22nd of May had its origin in the mistake made by the inscriber on the Raja's tombstone at Bristol. But "the Rev. C.H.A. Dall in a letter to the *Sunday Mirror* of January 18, 1880 reported that Rammohun's younger son Ramprasad Roy said in 1858 before a circle of friends and clients in Calcutta,--'My father was born at Radhanagar near Krishnagar in the month of May 1772, or according to the Bengali era, in the month of Jyaistha 1179.' Babu Lalitmohun Chatterji, another decendant of Rammohun, stated that, 'Rammohun Roy was born in the year 1772, on the 22nd day of May.' L.M. Chatterji gave this information to Rabindranath Tagore. The question of fixing Raja Rammohun Roy's birthday is answered by the above and there need be no further unnecessary arguments over it, for the reason that it was of no great consequence. Rather, such argument creates confusion in the public mind and prevents them from celebrating the bicentenary in a whole-hearted manner. The bicentenary celebration committee have decided to carry on the programme from the 22nd of May 1972, till the 22nd May 1974, with a view to appease everyone.

Raja Rammohun Roy's campaign against the practice of Suttee began about fifteen years before this burning alive of widows was prohibited by law by Lord William Bentinck. Raja Rammohun Roy published an *Abstract of the Arguments regarding the Burning of Widows considered as a Religious Rite* in 1830 which stated clearly and concisely all "the points which had been scattered through many essays and tracts. These he grouped

under three heads. According to the Sacred Books of lhe Hindus concremation was : (1) not obligatory but at most optional; (2) not the most commendable but the least virtuous act a widow could perform; and (3) must be a voluntary ascending of the pile and entering into the flames—a mode never practised in the conventional Suttee. The tract concludes with devout 'Thanks to Heaven, whose protecting arm has rescued our weaker sex from cruel murder' and 'our character as a people' from international opprobrium."

(Collet : Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy, IIIrd edition, 1962, p. 266).

The above shows how strongly the Raja felt about the hideous custom. In the four years 1815-1818, the recorded number of widows who were thus burned to death was 2365. Out of these 1528 were from the Calcutta division.

Raja Rammohun Roy was a great *Shastric* scholar who devoted himself to the restoration of the Vedic and Vedantic ideals to Hindus. But, he was a great advocate of Western education through the medium of English, as he felt philosophy and mysticism alone could not help to build up a mental outlook which will enable Indians, as a nation, to hold their head high among the nations of the world. Raja Rammohun Roy wanted that India should progressively adopt a scientific outlook and set up all social, political and economic institutions that the Western nations had evolved. He nevertheless, wanted Indians to retain their cultural contacts with the intellectual achievements of the *Rishis* and desired to develop a spiritual vision that will keep Indians clearly off the dangerous quicksands of gross materialism. We find the following in the Report of the Education Commission appointed by Lord Ripon in 1882 : "It took twelve years of controversy, the advocacy of Macaulay and the decisive action of a new Governor-General, before the Committee could as a body aquiesce in the policy urged by him (Rammohun)."

(Collect : L. and L. of Raja Rammohun Roy)

Raja Rammohun Roy had expressed great concern for the well-being of the people of India in his various writings in the journals he published. Education, medical aid, civic rights, public institutions like cremation grounds etc.; all attracted his attention. Some examples have been given by Mr. Yogananda Das in his book 'Rammohun and the Brahmo Movement" (in Bengali).

Free education for the children of the poor, trial by Jury in the Mufassil, construction of more cremation grounds, hospitals for women and children, training up Indian doctors by Europeans, watering of roads, wasteful expenditure by rich people, charity to the poor etc. The people of the Brahmo Samaj, inspired by Raja Rammohun Roy took up extensive public benefit work, some of which have been mentioned by Mr. Yogananda Das. Famine relief, nursing the helpless sick persons, teaching deaf and dumb children, opening blind schools, orphanges, etc. and the upliftment of the depressed classes are fields of work which the Brahmo Samaj entered actively and with enthusiasm. We shall close this discussion now by quoting some lines from a letter written by Raja Rammohun Roy which Mr. Sandford Arnot published in the *Anthenaeum* of October 5, 1833 after the Raja's death. In that letter which he addressed to Mr. Gordon of Calcutta the Raja gave details of his own personal life :

"When about the age of sixteen, I composed a manuscript calling in question the validity of the idolatrous system of the Hindoos. This together with my known sentiments on that subject, having produced coolness between me and my immediate kindred, I proceeded on my travels and passed through different countries, chiefly within, but some beyond the bounds of Hindoostan, with a feeling of great aversion to the establishment of the British power in India. When I had reached the age of twenty my father recalled me, and restored me to his favour; after which I first saw and began to associate with Europeans and soon after made myself tolerably acquainted with their laws and form of Government. Finding them generally more intelligent, more steady and moderate in their conduct, I gave up my prejudice against them and became inclined in their favour, feeling persuaded that their rule though a foreign yoke, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of the native inhabitants; and I enjoyed the confidence of several of them even in their public capacity. My continued controversies with the Brahmins on the subject of their idolatry and superstition, and my interference with their custom of burning widows, and other pernicious practices, revived and increased their animosity against me and through their influence with my family, my father was again obliged to withdraw his countenance openly, though his limited pecuniary support was still continued to me . . . The ground which I took in all my controversies was not that of

opposition to Brahminism, but to a perversion of it, and I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahmins was contrary to the practice of their ancestors, and the principles of the ancient books and authorities, which they profess to reverse and obey. Notwithstanding the violence of the opposition and resistance to my opinions, several highly respectable persons both among my own relations and others, began to adopt the same sentiments."

"I now felt a strong wish to visit Europe, and obtain by personal observation a more thorough insight into its manners, customs, religion and political institutions. I refrained, however, from carrying this intention into effect until the friends who coincided in my sentiments should be increased in number and strength. My expectations having been at length realised, in November, 1830, I embarked for England, as the discussion of the East India Company's charter was expected to come on, by which the treatment of the natives of India, and its future government, would be determined for many years to come, and an appeal to the King in Council against the abolition of the practice of burning widows, was to be heard before the Privy Council; and his Majesty the Emperor of Delhi had likewise commissioned me to bring before the authorities in England certain encroachments on his rights by the East India Company. I accordingly arrived in England in April 1831."

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RAMMOHAN ROY

C.F. ANDREWS

A long and careful study of world history convinced me that Raja Rammohun Roy was by far the greatest religious genius of the 19th century. Even today, after a hundred years, we are only slowly and hesitatingly working out the supremely vital principles for which he had lived and died.

Born in the narrowest of family religious families in Bengal, in the later part of the 18th century, in had broken through one barrier after another which had confined the religious and social outlook of his age. He seemed guided by a divine instinct within, from childhood onward, which made him always direct his course to one single end, the 'Religious Unification of Mankind.'

The more I have studied his life the more I have felt that this principle of the Divine unity creating human unity and brotherhood was the guiding principle underlying all he did and said and thought. This is a conception which has its deepest root in Indian soil. The Search for the One is the passion of the Indian heart. Satisfaction only comes when that divine passion has found its fulfilment.

It was this supreme enthusiasm which drove the young lad to seek the Truth among the Himalayan mountains. It guided him to enter Tibet. There he nearly lost his life, but the women of Tibet, pitying his youth, saved him. Even from earliest days his mind was so massive in its greatness that it overleapt and obstacles and difficulties which stood in the way of obtaining intellectual culture.

He made himself proficient in Persian and Arabic in order that he might study the unity of God in Islam. He learnt Greek and Hebrew so that he might study those Jewish and Christian scriptures which led up to the birth of Christ and told the story of His life. His published the pure teaching of Jesus as he found it in the Sermon on the Mount and wrote a notable preface to his book which he called *The Precepts of Jesus*. Thus, he went to the sources or religious truth and was not content with any external knowledge of such vital subjects.

In practice, he was equally insistent on finding the unity of human life in society. He realized that the divine in mankind was obscured and obstructed by social abuses, such as existed in his own day. Fortunately, he found among those who had come out to India from England certain enlightened men and women who were ready to go any lengths in moral courage and perseverance in order to rescue mankind from these abuses which had gradually crept in. Thus, East and West were able to work together, for the first time, in a marvellously effective manner. Lord William Bentinck and Duff were great, each in their own way, and they fully recognized the moral genius of Raja Rammohun Roy. Miss Carpenter was, in her own sphere, equally great and collaborated with him to the end.

The closing days of Raja Rammohun Roy's life were saddened by much physical suffering, but at the same time enlightened with the glow of the rapid passage of certain moral and political reforms which were completed in the very year in which he died. For, only a month before he passed away, he was able to learn that the bill abolishing slavery had been passed, and the emancipation of the Negro race had begun. How greatly the news of this victory cheered his last days, we can read in the memoirs which have been written about him. He died in an auspicious year—the year when slavery was abolished and the great reform measures, granting political liberty, were being carried through. It was the year also when the change in the East India Company's constitution was confirmed, whereby racial eqality was enunciated for the first time.

As one looks back over the whole century since the death of Raja Rammohun Roy it is possible, as an historian, to watch the strength of the current setting in the opposite direction and rendering negatory the very things for which Raja Rammohun Roy had stood out so boldly and bravely. Racial equality in India and in the

rest of the world has not yet been attained. Political equality has been swept away since the war by one dictatorship after another. Even slavery has returned, in the form of indentured labour, in wage slavery under the cruel lash of economic pressure, and also in forced labour in many different ways. Central Africa and the Indian States were examples of the bad relics of the old slave system. What would have troubled Raja Rammohun Roy most of all would have been to find religious tolerance, on which he laid such stress, passing on into religious indifference and from thence into militant hatred of religion.

Thus, the great causes for which he stood out so boldly have not had an unchequered career. The backward current has often proved too rapid for the forward progress. Yet we can be certain, that, with a faith and courage so strong as his, Raja Rammohun Roy would have been today, if he had been living with us, in the vanguard of the great struggle for human liberty. He would never have been on the side of the reactionaries. His spirit is with us still to cheer us on.

33

RAM MOHAN ROY : BRIDGE BETWEEN TRADITION AND PROGRESS

P. KODANDA RAO

The 22nd of May, 1972, was the bi-centenary of the birth of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the great Indian nationalist and internationalist. When he said, "I would be free or not at all," he had not only India in his mind but all the nation of the world. He openly sympathised with all nations struggling for independence. The American and French revolutions thrilled him. On his way to England in 1831, he insisted on visiting at Cape Town, in South Africa, two French frigates flying the French Revolutionary flag as his tribute to the French Revolution. He celebrated the overthrow of Spanish imperialism in South America. When he heard that Austrian imperialism had over-run Naples in Italy, he lamented it as a personal loss :

> "From the late unhappy news, I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European colonies, possesed of a greater degree of the same blessing than what they enjoy. Under these circumstances I consider the cause of the Neopolitans as my own and their enemies as ours. Enemies of liberty and friends of despotism have never been and never will be ultimately successful."

In his letter to the French Ambassador in 1831, the Raja

envisaged international conciliation through an international body to settle international disputes. He said :

> "On general grounds I beg to observe that it appears to me that the end of constitutional government might be better attained by submitting every matter of political differences between two countries to a Congress composed of an equal number from the parliament of each; the decision of the majority to be acquiesced in by both nations; the chairman to be chosen by each nation alternatively for one year, and the place of meeting to be one year within the limits of one country and the next within those of the other, such as Dover and Calais for England and France. By such a Congress all matters of difference, whether political or commercial, affecting the natives of any two civilized countries with constitutional governments, might be settled amicably and justly to the satisfaction of both, and profound peace and friendly feelings might be preserved between them from generation to generation."

In the same letter, he pleaded for greater freedom of international intercourse to promote mutual understanding. He said :

> "It is now generally admitted that, not religion only, but unbiassed common sense, as well as the accurate deductions of scientific research, lead to the conclusion that all mankind are one great family, of which numerous nations and tribes existing are only branches. Hence, enlightened men in all countries feel a wish to encourage and facilitate human intercourse in every manner by removing as far as possible, all impediments to it, in order to promote reciprocal advantage and enjoyment of the whole human race."

While the Raja was solicitous of political freedom for the more advanced nations of Europe, he did not demand it for India in his time, as she was not then ripe for it. He, however, hoped that in about a hundred years India would deserve to be free and would achieve it and be willing ally of England or her determined enemy.

As he prognosticated, India became free after a little over a

hundred years—not as the determined enemy, but as the willing ally, of England.

The Raja pleaded for the freedom of the press and opposed its licensing :

> "Every good ruler, who is convinced of the imperfections of human nature and reverences the eternal Governor of the world, must be conscious of the great liability to error in managing the affairs of a vast empire; and therefore, he will be anxious to afford every individual the readiest means of bringing to his notice whatever may require his interference."

Almost single-handed he protested against the Regulation of 1823, licensing the press in India. An Englishman, Mr. Turton, whom he engaged to argue his case in the Supreme Court, said of the Raja at a meeting :

> "A very short time after my arrival in this country an Act was passed by the Government which met with the general reprobation of those who were governed; but no one came forward with the manliness and boldness that Ram Mohan Roy did to express his sentiments on the odious measure. A man born and bred in Britain could not have come forward more completely heart and soul in support of that which was the cause of his country than Ram Mohan Roy did in 1823. I then made his acquaintance in the first instance, and was surprised, delighted, to see an inordinate love of liberty in a man reared and bred in the spirit of dependence, if dependence could exist in such a mind; and it is, therefore, that I have come forward to assist with my endeavours, humble though they be, the objects of this meeting. If anything that I could say could lead any of his countrymen to follow so bright an example, I should deam this the happiest and prodest moment of my life."

Perhaps, the Raja's greatest service to India was his plea for the introduction of English and education in modern science in India. In his letter, dated 11th December 1823, to the then Governor-General, Lord Amherst, the Raja wrote :

"I beg your Lordship will be pleased to compare the state of Science and Literature in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon with the progress of knowledge made since he wrote. If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of the schoolmen which was the best calcutated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner, the Sanskrit system of education would be best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British Legislature. But, as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightend system of instruction, embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry and anatomy, with other useful sciences which may be accomplished with the sum proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with the necessary books, instruments and other apparatus."

At a time when enlightened and humanitarian liberalism was in the ascendant in England, a Reform Bill was introduced in the British Parliament. And when inspite of determined opposition, the Bill was passed, the Raja rejoiced. In a letter to a British friend, he wrote :

"As I publicly avowed that in the event of the Reforms Bill being defeated, I would renounce my connection with Britain, I refrained from writing until I knew the result. Thank Heaven ! I can now feel proud of being one of your fellow-subjects and heartily rejoice that I have the infinite happiness of witnessing the salvation of the nation; nay, of the whole world !"

Born in a Hindu family in Bengal, Ram Mohan Roy was educated in Hindu orthodoxy of the day. He learnt Persian, then the court language. Later, he learnt Arabic to read the *Quran*, Greek and Hebrew to read the Bible; and Sanskrit to read the Hindu scriptures in the original. He was among the first students of comparative religion. He was against idolatry and kept up a vigorous campaign against it. He published a book on monotheism

in Persian, with an introduction in Arabic ! To give them wider currency, he translated the *Upanishads* from Sanskrit into Bengali, English and Hindustani. He accepted the moral teachings of Christ, but denied his divinity. Thereby he antagonised both the Hindu and Christian orthodoxy.

William Adam tried to convert Ram Mohan to Christianity, but Ram Mohan converted Adam to unitarianism ! Ram Mohan established an eclectic religion of monotheism, combining what, in his opinion, were the best elements of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, but primarily based on Hinduism of the *Upanishads*, as opposed to the *Puranas*. It was called *Brahmoism*, which inculcated the worship of "the Eternal, the Unsearchable and the Immutable." Even though he forbade the worship of idols, he would not tolerate any contemptuous reference by others to idol worship. He was thus a great religious reformer.

In his youth he witnessed the unwilling *sati* of his brother's widow. He was no moved against the cruel system that the vowed to strive to abolish it. For his attack, he invoked the authority of the Hindu scriptures themselves ! He met with great opposition from the orthodox sections of the people. British administrators feared to interfere with the custom even on humanitarian grounds. After a good deal of hesitation, the Government of Lord William Bentinck abolished it by law in 1829. Subsequently, when Hindu orthodoxy petitioned the British Privy Council to repeal Bentick's law, Ram Mohan intervened successfully in favour of its retention.

Ram Mohan vigorously attacked other social customs like polygamy, caste, etc., and advocated many reforms, social and educational, economic and political. He was the pioneer of modern Bengali prose.

Of the Raja's visit to England in 1830-31, the Rt. Hon. Max Mueller said :

> "For the sake of intellectual intercourse, for the sake of comparing notes, so to say, with his Aryan brothers, Ram Mohan Roy was the first to come from the East to the West; the first to join hands and to complete the worldwide circle through which, like an electric current, Oriental thought could run to the West, and, Western thought return to the East, making us feel once more that ancient brotherhood which unites the whole Aryan race, inspiring us with new hopes for a common

faith, purer and simpler than any of the ecclesiastical relgion of the world and invigorating us for acts of daring the conquest of truth than any that are inscribed in the chronicles of our divided past."

The Raja's English biographer, Miss Collet, summed up his career thus :

"Ram Mohan stands in history as the living bridge over which India marches from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future. He was the arch which spanned the gulf that yawned between ancient caste and modern hunanity, between superstition and science, between despotism and democracy, between immobile custom and a conservative progress, between a bewildering polytheism and a pure, if vugue, theism. He was the mediator of his people, harmonizing in his own person, often by means of his own solitary sufferings, the conflicting tendencies of immemorial tradition and of inevitable enlightenment."

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RAMMOHAN ROY : THE STORY OF HIS LIFE

PANDIT SIVANATH SASTRI

Raja Rammohan Roy was born on the 22nd of May, 1772 at Radhanagar in Bengal. His immediate ancestors, who held positions of trust and responsibility under the Government of Murshidabad, were renowned for their piety and orthodoxy.

From infancy, Rammohun was marked out for his talents. He received his elementary education in a *Pathshala*, with tuition in Persian from a *Moulvi*; his father then sent him to the city of Patna, at that time a famous seat of Mahommedan learning, to perfect his knowledge of Persian and learn Arabic, then the passports to fame and position. Rammohun is said to have been specially enchanted with the views of *Sufi* writers which tallied with those of the *Vedantic* school.

At the early age of sixteen, shortly after his return from Patna, the daring youth conceived the plan of leaving home for a journey of several thousand miles on foot and crossing the Himalayas to Tibet to study Buddhism. Such travels on the part of young enthusiasts were not unknown in those days. Companies of Hindu mendicants were constantly moving about all over the country, visiting places of pilgrimage and collecting new disciples. In Tibet, Rammohan incurred the displeasure of the Lama-worshippers by his opposition to idolatry, and escaped from death only through the kindness of some Tibetan ladies. On return from his travels, which seem to have occupied three or four years, he settled down in Benaras to study Sanskrit and the sacred literature of the Hindus.

In 1803, soon after the death of his father, Rammohan Roy moved to Murshidabad, where he published a Persian treatise, with an Arabic preface, entitled *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin* or "A Gift to Monotheists", protesting against superstitions of creeds and suggesting a common foundation of Universal Religion in the doctrine of the unity of the God-head. He also published another work in Persian, called *Manazarat-ul-Adiyan* or "Discussions on various Religions." About this time, he received an appointment under the East India Company in its Revenue Department. After serving at Ramgarh, Bhagalpur and other places, he went to Rangpur in 1809 where the next five years proved a fruitful period.

Something like an informal club used to meet every evening at Rammohan's residence, which attracted all classes of people and gave rise to earnest discussions on religious topics. In the midst of his arduous duties and frequent meetings, he found time to improve his knowledge of English; Mr. Digby, the Collector of Revenue, has recorded that while at Rangpur, Rammohan Roy began to take a keen interest in European politics, specially in the course of the French Revolution. Rammohan's sympathy with the cause of freedom ever remained warm. Though employed in the most engrossing secular duties during these years, he never lost sight of the grand mission of his life, the religious reformation of his country.

In 1815, Rammohan Roy settled down in Calcutta. By this time, his reformatory doctrines were fairly well-known to his countrymen in the metropolis. Many reports of the meetings held at Rangpur and of his sayings there had reached them, and he was already an interesting personality to many. Consequently, when he arrived at the scene of his future labours, a coterie of sympathetic souls, several of them belonging to influential families, naturally gathered round him. All these men did not have the same motives in approaching him. Some sought his company from a sense of the great honour association with one so distinguished brought them; others frequented his house for the wise counsel and ready help that he always rendered to all in need, whilst a few were actuated by a genuine sympathy with his principles. With these last he established the *Atmiya Sabha*.

For the first two years the *Atmiya Sabha* held its weekly meetings in the garden-house of Rammohan Roy at Maniktala, where Sivaprasad Misra used to recite and expound texts from the Hindu scriptures and a well-known musician called Govinda Malla

used to sing hymns composed by Rammohan Roy and his friends. After two years the society moved first to Rammohan's house now situated on Amherst Street and subsequently to other places, finally finding a shelter at the house of Bihari Lal Chaubay in Barabazar, where in 1819, occurred a celebrated debate between Rammohan Roy and Subrahmanya Sastri, a learned Brahmin from Madras, in the presence of leading citizens of Calcutta.

During the course of his researches into ancient texts, Rammohan Roy had been struck by the purity of the monotheistic doctrines of the *Upanishads*; he now decided to publish them with his preface and translations as the most effective means of rousing his countrymen to a sense of the superiority of the monotheistic creed. Nor were his expectations belied. The publications soon produced an intense and widespread agitation in Indian society. Their effect extended to the Presidency of Madras, and even reached the shores of England.

Upto that time Rammohan Roy had confined himself mainly to old Hindu scriptures as his authority in appealing to his countrymen. But in 1820, he startled his friends as well as his enemies by issuing a new book. *The Precepts of Jesus*, a collection of all the moral and spiritual precepts of Jesus, as recorded in the four Gospels, without the narratives of the miracles. The prejudice against Christianity was very strong at that time; while the book was published in the face of such national prejudice, it called forth hostile criticism from an unexpected quarter.

The Bapitist missionaries of Serampore vigorously assailed it in their weekly paper, "*The Friend of India*" contemptuously stigmatizing the compiler as a "heathen". The moral and spiritual portions of the Gospels alone, divested of the miraculous portions, were in their estimation insufficient for the purpose of human salvation. This gave rise to a controversy which finally turned upon the doctrine of Trinity, and Rammohan Roy successively published three "Appeals to the Christian Public", in which, by a rare display of polemical skill and profound Biblical learning, he tried to uphold the doctrine of the unity of God-head. During the course of his researches into the Christian Scriptures he had not confined himself only to the English rendering of the Bible, but had acquired Hebrew and Greek in order to refer to the original.

Mr. William Adam, a young Baptist missionary, who had come out from England a few years earlier to join the Serampore

Mission, opently professed, in 1821, his conversion to Unitarian doctrines through the influence of Rammohan Roy. The Serampur missionaries attacked the Indian reformer. From the columns of "*The Friend of India*", they carried their criticism into those of "*Samachar Durpan,*" their Bengali organ. Rammohan Roy, a valiant controversialist, promptly replied to them, but as he was denied the common courtesy of having his replies published, he started his own journal, the *Brahmanical Magazine*, and challenged Christian theologians to defend their Trinitarian and Calvinistic doctrines, offering to print and circulate their replies at his own expense.

In 1828, Rammohan Roy called a meeting of his friends; it was decided to open a place for the unsectarian worship of the One True God. A house was rented to accommodate the first theistic congregation. Here, on the 6th of Bhadra, Saka era 1750, corresponding to the 20th of August 1828, the first Samaj was opend. Meetings of the Samaj were held every Saturday evening; two Telugu Brahmins recited the Vedas, Utsavananda Vidyabagish read texts of the Upanishads, which were afterwards explained in Bengali, a sermon was then preached or read, followed by devotional songs sung by Govinda Malla. Within two years Rammohan Roy was able to raise sufficient funds for the purchase of a house on Chitpur Road for a permanent place of worship for the members of the society.

The opening of the new theistic service, which the people of the time called the "Brahma Sabha", once more roused the enmity of the orthodox community. Their feelings of hostility were further aggravated by the rumour that now became current, and which soon proved to be too well-founded, that Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General, contemplated the abolition of the custom of burning Hindu widows alive on the funeral pyres of their husbands. The decree abolishing *Suttee* was promulgated on 4th December, 1829. As they justly attributed the anti-*Suttee* agitation to Rammohan Roy, their resentment against him knew no bounds. They organized a rival association called the "Dharma Sabha" and in their organ, '*Samachar Chandrika*', daily poured abuse on the reformers who replied in their periodical '*Sambad Kaumudi*' with equal energy. The common people became participators in this great controversy : for the tracts of the reformers, mostly written in the simplest Bengali, appealed to them as much as to the enlightened

classes. At the bathing ghats, at the riverside, in the markets, in public squares, in the drawing rooms of influential citizens, everywhere the issue between the two associations began to be discussed; the agitation spread from Calcutta to the interior of the country.

Before the establishment of the Brahma Sabha, another step had been taken by Rammohan Roy for the propagation of theism. In 1825, he had founded the Vedanta College for the teaching of the monotheistic doctrines of the Vedanta; Rammohan Roy, to use the language of one of his biographers, "saw in the Vedanta, rightly handled and rightly explained, the means for leading his countrymen into pure and elevated theism."

The period between 1820 and 1830 was also eventful from a literary point of view. It is indeed a matter for wonder how in the midst of so much active work Rammohan Roy could make time to write so many masterly treatises on such a variety of subjects ! Although, it occupied the foremost place in his mind, religious reformation alone did not absorb his whole attention, his endeavours in other fields of reforms were no less incessant and arduous. Not many people now realise how much of their present political and social advancement they owe to the impulse generated by Rammohan Roy.

The women of Begal at the time were living under the most abject from of social slavery. As many as 309 widows were burnt alive with their husbands within the jurisdiction of Calcutta alone in 1828, the year in which the Brahma Sabha was established. It was but natural that the misery and degradation of womanhood should have strongly appealed to the sympathetic heart of Rammohan Roy; his earnest pleadings on their behalf form an important feature of his writings. The women of India have found no greater defender of their rights than Rammohan Roy. He defended the legal rights of women, advocated their right to education and enlightenment, and, above all, devoted all his energies to save them from the cruel custom of *Suttee.*

In 1813, Lord Moira had issued certain Regulations to restrict *suttee* only partially, but this led to such an agitation in orthodox society that a petition was sent to the Governor-General insisting on their repeal. This evoked a strong counter-petition from Rammohan Roy who also issued several tracts, proving that the self-immolation of a window was nowhere enjoined as a duty in Hindu

scriptures, which considered a life of piety and self-abnegation more virtuous, points on which the Governor-General Lord William Bentinck eventually based the Preamble of his anti-*Suttee* decree.

Rammohan Roy's efforts on behalf of women did not terminate with the passing of Lord William Bentinck's decree. His adversaries roused themselves up once more and on 14th January, 1830 presented two mammoth petitions, one signed by 800 citizens and backed by the opinions of 120 Pandits and the other signed by 340 persons from the mofussil areas, contending that the position taken by the Governor-General was untenable; at a public meeting they resolved to appeal to the authorities in England. The opposition did not dismay Rammohan Roy. In an "Abstract of the Arguments regarding the Burning of Widows considered as a Religious Rite," he countered the arguments of the 120 Pandits. And one of his reasons for undertaking a voyage to England was to thwart the efforts which were being made there to obtain a repeal of Lord William Bentinck's abolition-decree. Thus, to the last, he fought for his country-women. In 1832, Rammohan Roy also published a treatise, entitl d, "The Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females according to the Hindu Law of inheritance," in which he condemned polygamy and exposed the abject misery in which widows were forced to live.

Rammohan Roy's contribution to the cause of English education was no less remarkable. He was first trained as a Persian scholar, to which he subsequently added an intimate knowledge of Sanskrit. Very few men of his time could claim a better acquaintance with the ancient learning of the people, yet by his genius and foresight he could see that the future regeneration of his country lay in a due cultivation of the Western sciences. In 1818, in consultation with Mr. David Hare, his friend and fellow worker, he formed the plan of opening an educational institution for instruction in the science and literature of Europe. Sir Hyde East, the Chief Justice of the Supereme Court, earnestly supported his proposal, which eventually led to the foundation of the Hindu College. He also started and maintained with his own funds an English School in another part of the town, where Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore, the second great leader of the Brahmo Samaj movement, received his first education. The Government of Lord Amherst, on the establishment of a Council of Education in 1823, wanted to allot available funds for only oriental learning among

But alas ! Providence had ruled otherwise. Within a few days of his arrival he was attacked with a fatal malady which terminated his noble career on the 27th of September. Miss Hare, the niece of his friend Mr. David Hare of Calcutta, who attended on him during his last moments, has recorded that he finally closed his lips with the word, AUM, the well-known Vedic syllable meaning the Supreme Being. His mortal remains now rest in Arno's Vale at Bristol, over which Dwarkanath Tagore built a beautiful mausoleum.

35

INAUGURATOR OF THE MODERN AGE

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Rammohun Roy inaugurated the Modern Age of India. He was born at a time when our country having lost its link with the inmost truths of its being, struggled under a crushing load of unreason, in abject slavery to circumstance. In social usage, in politics, in the realm of religion and art, we had entered the zone of uncreative habit, of decadent tradition, and ceased to exercise our humanity. In this dark gloom of India's degeneration Rammohan rose up, a luminous star in the firmament of India's history, with prophetic purity of vision, and unconquerable heroism of soul. He shed radiance all over the land; he rescued us from the penury of self-oblivion. Through the dynamic power of his personality, his uncompromising freedom of the spirit, he vitalized our national being with the urgency of creative endeavour, and launched it into the arduous adventure of realization. He is the great path-maker of this century who has removed ponderous obstacles that impeded our progress at every step, and initiated us into the present Era of world-wide co-operation of humanity.

Rammohan belongs to the lineage of India's great seers, who age after age have appeared in the arena of our history with the message of Eternal Man. India's special genius has been to acknowledge the divine in human affairs, to offer hospitality to all that is imperishable in human civilization, regardless of racial and national divergence. From the early dawn of our history it has been India's privilege and also its problem, as a host, to harmonise the diverse elements of humanity which have inevitably been

brought to our midst, to synthetize contrasting cultures in the light of a comprehensive ideal. The stupendous structure of our social system with its intricate arrangement of caste testifies to the vigorous attempt made at an early stage of human civilization to deal with the complexity of our problem, to relegate to every class of our people, however wide the cleavage between their levels of culture, a place in a cosmopolitan scheme of society. Rammohan's predecessors, Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, and innumerable saints and seers of medieval India, carried on much farther India's great attempt to evolve a human adjustment of peoples and races; they broke through barriers of social and religious exclusiveness and brought together India's different communities on the genuine basis of spiritual reality. Now that our outworn social usages are yielding rapidly to the stress of an urgent call of unity, when rigid enclosures of caste and creed can no more obstruct the freedom of our fellowship, when India's spiritual need of faith and concord between her different peoples has become imperative and seems to have aroused a new stir of consciousness throughout the land, we must not forget that this emancipation of our manhood has been made possible by the indomitable personality of the great Unifier, Rammohan Roy. He paved the path for this reassertion of India's inmost truth of being, her belief in the equality of man in the love of the Supreme Person, who ever dwells in the hearts of all men and unites us in the bond of welfare.

Rammohan was the only person in his time, in the whole world of man, to realize completely the significance of the Modern Age. He knew that the ideal of human civilization does not lie in the isolation of independence, but in the brotherhood of inter-dependence of individuals as well as of nations in all spheres of thought and activity. He applied this principle of humanity with his extraordinary depth of scholarship and natural gift of intuition, to social, literary and religious affairs, never acknowledging limitations of circumstance, never deviating from his purpose lured by distractions of temporal excitement. His attempt was to establish our peoples on the full consciousness of their own cultural personality, to make them comprehend the reality of all that was unique and indestructiable in their civilization, and simultaneously to make them approach other civilizations in the spirit of sympathetic co-operation. With this view in his mind he tackled an amazingly wide range of social, cultural and religious problems of our country,

and through a long life spent in unflagging service to the cause of India's cultural reassertion, brought back the pure stream of India's philosophy to the futility of our immobile and unproductive national existence. In social ethics he was an uncompromising interpreter of the truths of human relationship, tireless in his crusade against social wrongs and superstition, generous in his co-operation with any reformer, both of this country and outside, who came to our aid in a genuine spirit of comradeship. Unsparingly, he devoted himself to the task of rescuing from the debris of India's decadence the true products of its civilization, and to make our people build on them, as the basis, the superstructure of an international culture. Deeply versed in Sanskrit, he revived classical studies, and while he imbued the Bengali literature and language with the rich atmosphere of our classical period, he opened its doors wide to the Spirit of the Age, offering access to new words from other languages, and to new ideas. To every sphere of our natural existence he brought the sagacity of a comprehensive vision, the spirit of self-manifestation of the unique in the light of the universal.

Let me hope that in celebrating his Centenary we shall take upon ourselves the task of revealing to our own and contemporaneous civilizations the multi-sided and perfectly balanced personality of this great man. We in this country, however, owe a special responsibility, not only of bringing to light his varied contributions to the Modern Age, but of proving our right of kinship with him by justifying his life, by maintaining in every realm of our national existence the high standard of truth which he set before us. Great men have been claimed by humanity by its persecution of them and wilful neglect. We evade our responsibility for those who are immeasurably superior to us by repudiating them. Rammohan suffered martyrdom in his time, and paid the price of his greatness. But out of his sufferings, his power of transmuting them to carry on further beneficent, activities for the good of humanity, the Modern Age has gained an undying urge of life. If we fail him again in this day of our nation-building, if we do not observe perfect equity of human relationship offering uncompromising fight to all forms and conventions, however ancient they may be in usage, which separate man and man, we shall be pitiful in our failure, and shamed for ever in the history of man. Our futility will be in the measure of the greatness of Rammohan Roy.

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A REFORMER ABOVE ALL

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU*

Chaitanya, a great scholar who became a man of faith and emotion, established a form of Vaishnavism, based on faith, and influenced greatly the people of Bengal. This tradition of loving faith and service of humanity was represented in the second half of the nineteenth century by another remarkable man of saintly character, Ramakrishna Paramahansa; in his name an order of service was established which has an unequalled record in humanitarian relief and social work.

Ramakrishna represented the old India tradition. Before him in the eighteenth century, another towering personality had risen in Bengal, Raja Rammohan Roy, who was a new type combining in himself the old learning and the new. Deeply versed in Indian thought and philosophy, a scholar in Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, he was a product of mixed Hindu-Moslem culture that was then dominant among the cultured classes of India. The coming of the British to India and their superiority in many ways led his curious and adventurous mind to find out what their cultural roots were. He learnt English but this was not enough; he learnt Greek, Latin, and Hebrew also to discover the sources of religion and culture of the West.

He was also attracted by science and the technical aspects of Western civilization, though at that time these technical changes

*The First Prime Minister of India.

were not so obvious as they subsequently became. Being of a philosophical and scholarly bent, Rammohan Roy inevitably went to the older literatures. Describing him, Monier-Williams, the Orientialist, has said that he was 'perhaps the first earnest-minded investigator of the science of Comparative Religion that the world has produced'; and yet, at the same time, he was anxious to modernize education and take it out of the grip of the old scholasticism. Even in those early days he was in favour of the scientific method, and he wrote to the Governor-General emphasizing the need for education in 'mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy and other useful sciences'.

He was more than a scholar and an investigator; he was a reformer above all. It was largely because of his agitation for the abolition of Suttee that the British Government prohibited it. This Suttee, or the immolation of women on the funeral pyre of their husbands, was never widespread. But rare instances continued to occur among the upper classes. Probably the practice was brought to India originally by the Scytho-Tartars. In early Sanskrit literature, the Suttee custom is denounced. Akbar tried hard to stop it, and the Marathas also were opposed to it.

Rammohan Roy was one of the founders of the Indian press. From 1780 onwards, a number of newspapers had been published by Englishmen in India. The first Indian owned and edited newspaper was issued (in English) in 1818, and in the same year the Baptist missionaries of Serampore brought out a Bengali monthly and a weekly, the first periodicals published in an Indian language. Newspapers and periodicals in English and the Indian languages followed in quick succession in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.

Meanwhile the struggle for a free press had already begun, to continue with many ups and downs till today, Rammohan Roy was associated with several newspapers. He brought out a *bilingual*, Bengali-English magazine, and later, desiring an all-India circulation, he published a weekly in Persian, which was recognized then as the language of the cultured classes all over India. But this came to grief soon after the enactment in 1823 of new measures for the control of the press. Rammohan and others protested vigorously against these measures.

Rammohan Roy's journalistic activities were ultimately

connected with his reform movements. His synthetic and univesalist points of view were resented by orthodox sections who also opposed many of the reforms he advocated. But he also had staunch supporters, among them the Tagore family which played an outstanding part later in the renaissance in Bengal.

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A PHILOSOPHIC MODERNIST

SARVAPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN*

Though a hundred years have gone by since Rammohan Roy died in far-off Bristol, and manifold changes have taken place in the course of their passing, the work to which he set his hand in times long past is not destroyed, nor could be, unless our country is doomed to founder in a night of hideous disaster. As a matter of fact, we are today able to realise the peculiar relevance of his message much more vividly than at the time of his death.

His widespread influence, as is evident from the celebrations in every part of the country of the centenary of his death, is not due entirely to the rapid increase of communications. It is because Rammohan Roy was the pioneer of the modern generation, the first to voice the aspirations of an epoch, of a spirit which rising from the troubled waters of the old world, takes the shape and lineaments of the new. So long as we are held in the grip of old traditions, while eager to learn, Rammohan Roy has a message for us.

He felt the contradictions and confusions in society, the social suffering and injustice, the anguish and desolation in homes, due to hard dogmatism and fantastic notions. Our social difficulties were exaggerated into national proportions. Society was not a living whole. There was no sense of purpose in the social body. There was something wrong about the country and it was the duty of all earnest and patriotic men to find out what was wrong with it. Our

*Former President of India.

saints and seers, even those whom we worship as *avatars*, have been at one in asking us to bring about adjustments of different races and communities in this land. It is the age-old spirit of India which has been voiced from the earliest times down to our own day, from the Rishis of the Upanishads and Buddha to Rammohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi. Soaring above the tumult of warring sects and rival communities, Rammohan Roy addressed his message to the suffering heart of humanity. There is no question that at this moment what the country requires is social readjustment. Even as we are entering on a new political future, communal feuds are threatening our very existence.

Rammohan Roy was a Philosophic Modernist, a progressive religious thinker, anxious to emphasise the essentials of religion. The modernist in every creed is anxious to cling to the old that ages not and so is prepared to give up the old that ages. Only thus can religion become an instrument, not merely of conservation, but of progress as well.

George Tyrrell, the great Catholic modernist, said that the essence of religion lay in "mysticism and charity." Rammohan Roy came to the same conclusion. He studied the different religions of India,—Hinduism, Islam and Christianity—in their sources and founded a religious fellowship, which could bring together the liberal-minded of all denominations—a Church Universal. Even those who belong to other faiths are the servants of God, though they labour in other parts of the vineyard. Only those can grasp the true spirit of any faith, we look at it as a historic movement, a growing tradition. The spirit of Hinduism can be found not in this or that stage of its history, or this or that sectarian movement which arose within it. They are its lisping expressions; the intended significance is what binds the different stages and different movements, and makes them all expressions of one fundamental faith. If then we take a historical or synthetic view, we will discover that while the faith of the Hindus is as broad-based as human nature itself, its practical application cannot end short of the building of a human commonwealth.

The problem of practical religion is to preserve one's faith in the spirit and bring it into a vital and reasonable relation with concreate actuality. The ordinary criticism that religion and politics should be kept apart interprets both these terms in a narrow sense. If religion is mistaken for routine and ritual, and

politics for careers and communalism, then one has nothing to do with the other. But, there is a sense in which religion is politics and politics is religion. Religion is altruism as well as adoration. It has for its natural result social work. Worship of God is service of man. Mahatma Gandhi said somewhere that there are many people who are politicians at heart, who put on the garb of religious men; but he is a religious man putting on the politician's garb. Gandhi's great interest in politics is his interest in religion, in the religious principles of truth and Ahimsa. He is anxious that society should adopt them and thus itself be raised.

Rammohan Roy was an ardent patriot and therefore a social reformer. We cannot achieve our political ends if we do not build a juster and stabler social order. During his time, as it is to a large extent today, religion has been used to deny justice and delay reform. People were oppressed with a sense of false values and doubtful standards. He reflected on the religious principles and found out that there was no justification for the horrors which were perpetrated in the name of religion, for the bitterness it has brought into human life. It has protected every abuse and sheltered every privilege, though these abuses and privileges are in direct violation of the central principles. Take caste exclusiveness. The Mahabharata says :

एकवर्णमिदं पूर्ण विश्वमासीद युधिष्ठिर ।
कर्मक्रियाविशेषेण चातुर्वर्ण्यं प्रतिष्ठितम् ।।

(This whole world was originally of one caste, O Yudhisthira; on account of different vocations, the four-fold caste was established.)

It is a matter of deep humiliation that in the 20th century we should be discussing the problem of untouchability. That there should be two opinions on it points out how superficial our culture and religion are. That we should think it possible to confine millions of our fellow-beings to hereditary degradation and yet at the same time work a democratic constitution, shows how the human mind is a victim of self-contradiction. It is absurd to talk about *shastras*, for we have taken liberties with them whenever we wanted. To condemn a whole class of human beings who are perfectly innocent because of their birth is the height of folly and insolence. The word 'chandala' is of tenused in the sense of a sinner, and if we are to treate all sinners, *patitas*, as untouchables,

many of us will not escape that fate. It is an immoral custom for which there is no justification. It is just a matter of habit.

न कुलं कुलमित्याहुर आचरम कुलमुच्यते ।

The motive force of Rammohan Roy's activity, social, political and religious, was a deep faith in the indwelling God. Dogmas might differ, but all religions speak with one voice as far as essentials are concerned. The one golden thread running through all religions is compassion for suffering humanity.

38

FROM MONOTHEISM TO MONOLATRY

MAHADEV GOVIND RANADE

Rammohan Roy was at once a social reformer, the founder of a great religious movement and a great politician. These three activities were combined in him in such a way that they put to shame the performances of the best among us at the present time. Raja Rammohan Roy's services to the country were not confined to any particular department of human activity.

The spirituality, the deep piety and universal toleration which are manifest in every word of the Trust Deed of the Brahmo Samaj, represent an ideal of beauty and perfection which it may yet take many centuries before its full singnificance is understood by our people. What Raja Rammohan Roy felt was that we had in India a nation gifted with a religious history transcending all the records of every other race. Here was a nation which was gifted was well endowed, was spiritual in all its real aspirations. This nation had gradualiy ascended to the purest form of Monotheism that the world has yet seen. In the Upanishads and in the Bhagavad Gita it had developed—not by a mere impulse, not by the command of any single prophet, but by the slow process of growth and evolution —a system of the purest form of Monotheism that man can conceive. The higher thought of the nation had learned to place its trust in a universal spirit, the one without a second, in whom all lived and moved and had their being, who was the cause of all, the Lord of all, the Friend of all, the guide of all, the most fatherly of fathers, and the most motherly of mothers. One age after another

constructed the edifice, laying brick upon brick and layer upon layer, and story after story rose. Well, this higher conception was not only confined to Pandits, Philosophers and Shastris, but it was the common property of every class. The very lowest shared this common faith equally with the Brahmins, the Pandits and the Yogis.

While Raja Rammohun Roy was struck with this universal prevalence of the monotheistic principle, he was deeply pained at the thought that this exalted faith was turned to no practical account, because it was associated with external observances and rites which were in entire discord with it. These external rites and observances made the nation worship all manner of gods and goddesses, elemental, mythological, tribal and local divinities. This polytheism had also grown side by side with the higher teaching or the Upanishads, that God was One without a Second, and of the Bhagavad Gita that He alone was to be worshipped. This contrast between the monotheistic spirit and the polytheistic observances strikes every student of our religious life as a puzzle which baffles the understanding. You can well imagine how it must have struck a great soul like that of the Raja. The question that he put to himself was, how does it come to pass that monolatry does not go hand in hand with monotheism in India, when in other countries, where the monotheistic principle is less exclusively professed, monolatry has been for two housand years and more the prevailing practice? Rammohan Roy, with a view to bring into accord our practical devotions with our monotheistic faith, gathered together kindred souls who felt with him on this point and established the Brahmo Samaj. He did not regard the Brahmo Samaj faith as a new declaration of God's purposes. He aspired only to establish harmony between men's accepte faith and their practical observances by a strict monolatrous worship of the One Supreme Soul, a worship of the heart and not of the hands, a sacrifice of self and not of the possessions of the self. He wanted men and women to cherish their own ancient treasures of faith and to secure their freedom from the bondage of superstition and ignorance.

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FIRST OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL REFORMERS

SURENDRA NATH BANERGEA

The apostle of monotheism, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, the activity of Raja Rammohan Roy was not confined to religious matters. Religion shaped and guided his conduct. Deep religious convictions formed the nutriment of his soul as they were the crowning glory of his life. But he knew that duty to God comprised duty to man and the most acceptable way of serving the Almighty is by serving his creatures. The activity of his political life was not the least conspicuous feature of his career. In these days, political agitation is viewed with disfavour and political agitators are regarded as a mischievous class. However, that may be, we who belong to that class and glory in it, claim Rammohan Roy as our leader, our guide, our revered preceptor in the difficult struggle for political regeneration. He advocated the freedom of the Press at a time when the Press was not yet free. He advocated the separation of the judicial from executive functions at a time when nobody had apparently thought of the reform; and this is a reform which the National Congress urges from year to year and urges in vain. With the pre-science of genius, as if anticipating an evil which did not prevail in his own time and which it was reserved for Lord Salisbury to bring about in these days, he deprecated the appointment of men who were too young to offices in the Civil Service. Rammohan Roy suggested 22 years as the minimum limit of age for admission into the Covenanted Service. The Public Service Commissions have recommended 23 years as the maximum age limit.

I have heard it said that religious reformers should not take part in politics. Why not? Is not politics a part of our duty? And does not religion embrace the whole circle of our duties? Yes, politics based upon religion or deep moral earnestness is the one thing that is needful for this country. Politics divorced from a high moral purpose becomes the paltry squabble for power in which humanity can feel no interest. Take the case of the Home Rule agitation. Withdraw from it the personality of Mr. Gladstone and his intense moral earnestness, withdraw from it the deep favour of the Irish patriots and it becomes a miserable struggle for political power in which the deeper interests of humanity are lost sight of. Take again the case of the Pilgrim Fathers, the founders of American greatness. They preferred exile to the miseries of a life where their conscientious convictions had to be sacrificed. They crossed the ocean and settted in a foreign land. They established their own religion and their own government. They developed themselves into statesmen and became the founders of the noblest Government and the free race that the world has ever seen.

The first of political agitators and the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, Rammohan Roy was also the first of Indian social reformers. What is the essence of social reform? What is its first and last word—its vitalising principle? All the social reform consists in the elevation of women, the removal of their disabilities and the restoration to them of that position of dignity and honour which is theirs by right. Rammohan Roy was well-equipped for this task. The fertilising stream of deep motherly affection had been poured into his heart from his earliest years. May be more. When, driven from home by the persecuting hand of his relatives, he wandered among the wilds of Tibet, it was again the protecting arm of a woman that saved him from a violent death. He had throughout his life received in rich abundance the sweet and healing balsam of womanly affection.

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SPIRIT OF RAMMOHAN ROY

R. VENKATA RATNAM

Rammohan Roy is distinctly different from the other great men of India before his day. He is the father of a new race of Indian heroes. He heralds a new epoch in Indian history. He illustrious predecessors were mostly sages, a few philanthropists, some patriots. But, he was the first and the greatest nation-builder that India has produced.

His spirit ramified into diverse branches covering the whole area of national life. In his career is illustrated the harmonious play of that cycle of forces which by their conjoint operation evolve and shape out a modern nation. In range of vision, in reach of sympathy, in versatility of powers, in variety of activities, in co-ordination of interests, and in coalescence of ideal—in fine, as realising an all-round, all-receptive life in its manifold fulness, Rammohan Roy is a unique figure in the history of India—if not in the annals of the race.

He had fraternised with different schools of learning in their cloistered seclusion; he had plunged into the predominant theologies at their prime sources; he had communed with nature in her sublime solemnity; he had mixed with his kind in busy bustle; he had widened his vision with entensive travels; he had passed through the ordeal of domestic chastisement and social ostracism; he had mourned for the victims of dire famine; he bad writhed in heart at the ghastly sight of the immolation of helpless widows. Here was one that could truly say, "whatever concerns man is dear to me; my heart is the home of all the

race." Such was the rich outfit with which he set out on his great life jonrney as the fore-runner of a new era.

Comprehensive past all comparison as was the Raja's view of a full life, he was essentially a religious genius. His faith in the saving, regenerating power of the Spirit was unbounded. To him a progress not impelled by a religious force was worse than inconceivable,—it was degenerating, degrading. To the myriao ills of India, the sovereign remedy, according to him, was a living faith in a wise and living God : not a cloistered faith that scorns and shuns society, not a busy care-worn faith that assigns the leisure hour to a hurried worship, nor the prudent faith that imports a God to watch a truant word, nor yet a speculative faith that prefixes a creator to a law-governed universe. It was a personal communion with an immanent spirit, an implicit trust in an all-regulating Providence. It was a faith to which the universe was a consecrated temple, conscience a sacred oracle, duty a divine ordinance, truth the imperishable gospel, love the prefect rule, and life a progressive pilgrimage. It was a faith that interpreted law as the method, force as the will and matter as the localised potency of God. It was a faith that esteemed the world as a reflection, and history as a panoramic presentation, of the nature and the purpose of the Deity. With Rammohan Roy this faith, this sublime, invigorating Theism, was a passion, a power, and a joy. To Rammohan Roy this faith furnished alike the enduring basis and the cementing strength of a united and vigorous nation. Religion he held to be a natural, irresistible instinct in mankind, an appetite that knew no satisfaction till it realised itself in a felt contact with Supreme. This, the keynote of his religious message, is struck in what was perhaps his maiden work, the *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin.* And this message of a whole-souled faith in God and a whole-hearted love for humanity runs through his works with a persistence of purpose that is marvellous for his times and surroundings.

The hope and assurance of a reviving nation springs largely from its "storied past." Therein lies the evidence of national possibilities, the guarantee of national solvency, and in a large measure the impetus to national endeavour. Rammohan Roy's translations of the Upanishads, his elucidation of the Vedanta, his exposition of the Gayatri, his defence of Hindu Theism,—all these were suggested and sustained by his patriotic and nation-building purpose. He reiterates with tireless insistence that the most authoritative

scriptures of India proclaim the absolute unity and omnipotence of the Supreme Being; recognise Him alone as the object of worship, and His worship alone as the way to beautitude; and declare the inseparability of pure morality from true worship.

It may be worthwhile dwelling a little on the spirit in which the genius of Rammohan Roy interpreted and used the national scriptures. It was in the spirit, as Max Muller has pointed out, not of a prudent adherence to mere-antiquity, but of an honest search for seeds of imperishable truth, that he sought to lay down the Vedanta of the Upanishads, stripped of its strange and disguising coverings, as the basis of the new national life. Among the national scriptures he valued the Upanishads for their divine authority of eternal truth; among the great "world books" he welcomed them for their bracing, cheering national air. Free yet authoritative, true yet familiar, lasting yet homely, imperishable yet national, the Upanishads were to him the national (swadeshi) type and mould for Universal Religion. Thus, did he regain a national scripture for the rational soul, and furnish to the nation that hope and confidence from the past which is the indispensable precursor to national growth and expansion.

Rammohan Roy, the restorer of the Upanishadic Vedanta as the deepest insight of the Hindu (the Eastern) genius, was likewise the interpreter of the richest expression of the Semitic (the Western) genius—the heart of Jesus. The India of Rammohan was not—could not be—the India of the Rishis. A momentous change over the entire field of Indian life had resulted from the contact of Hindu and Mohammadan civilisations, culminating in the immortal declaration of Guru Nanak that he was neither a Hindu nor a Mohammadan, but "the equal soul's brother" of both. But heaven had ordained India to be a yet vaster spiritual *Prayag* of the world, the sacred confluence of the mighty world-currents of East and West. A more comprehensive synthesis than had hitherto been realised—had hitherto been possible—had to be attempted : a reverent garnering of 'the wisdom of the East and the West.' In this devout spirit of genuine yet thoughtful enthusiasm Rammohan Roy submitted his "Precepts of Jesus, the guide to peace and happiness" to the world, as an elevating spiritual and ethical code.

Nor need any suspicion be entertained that this commingling of the East and the West would have any denationalising tendency for the East. To lower uplifting ideals, to impair inner vitality, to

weaken a chaste 'passion for the Past' is to denationalise; but to swell the stream of life with incoming currents, to drain out its accumulated impurities, and to level down its hindering barriers of prejudice is truly to renationalise. This was an intuitive perception of Rammohan Roy, who was not only (to use Prof Sir M. Williams' language) "the first earnest minded investigator of the science of comparative religion that the world has produced", but also (as Prof. Max Muller put it) "the first to complete a connected life-current between the East and the West", the inspired engineer in the world of faith that cut the channel of communication, the spiritual Suez, between sea and sea, land-locked in the rigid sectarianism of exclusive revelation and set their separate surges of national life into one mighty world-current of universal humanity.

Another prominent harmonising element of the new spirit that Rammohan Roy poured into the ancient heart of Aryavarta is the universality of spiritual revelation. To him the presence of rich saving truth in every great religious dispensation was an axiom : the direct approach of every soul to its Diety an implication, a corollary, of spiritual worship : and the ultimate salvation of all a guarantee of God's immeasurable love and invincible righteousness. How liberalising and harmonising this new spirit is may be realised through the work and examples of those who have been vivified by the inspiration of the Raja's life. Where, it may be asked, save in a liberal monotheistic church, could be fostered the spiritual versatility of Keshub Chunder Sen, and the "catholic wholeness" of Ranade ?

But few words are needed to sketch Rammohan's application of the new spirit to the wants and demands of the age. Here too, the Raja's synthetic spirit served to elevate the social sentiment and to enlarge the social outlook of the country. In fact, it is here that his nation-building purpose stands out prominent even to the casual observer. The ethical method of the East is personal discipline; of the West social service. The ethical end of the East is self-refinement; of the West, social efficiency. But to the higher harmony of a soul that beholds in East and West the two wings of the same mansion of the Heavenly Father, may not the true ethical gospel lie in the self-realising fulfilment of the individual through social service, and the prefection of society through individual development ? It was through the co-ordination of individual and social interests that Raja Rammohan Roy employed the new spirit typified

by him in furthering national progress in all directions. How he lived every day of his life for his country and for humanity : how he toiled and spent himself as under his great Master's eye : how he dedicated his talents and resources to the religious, moral, educational, social, political and economic needs of his nation : aye, how his spirit went forth and his arm was stretched out in sorrowing sympathy or rejoicing fellowship, even beyond the confines of India—all that is for every incorporated in the story of the race. Verily. Rammohan is the *Bhagirath* of the ever-expanding stream of modern Indian Life.

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ARCHITECT OF MODERN INDIA

RUCHI RAM SAHNI*

Whenever I think of Rammohan Roy, before my mind's eye rises the picture of a man who can be truly called the Architect of Modern India. He laid the foundation of a grand national edifice, which he broad-based on freedom and equality. That grand edifice has several storeys, but the whole structure stands on the rock of freedom--freedom for man, freedom for woman, freedom for the so-called untouchable. That is the real secret of Rammohan Roy's life. Only if people realise that secret, would they truly honour the memory of that pioneer of Indian regeneration.

The people of India, perhaps, have not been able to hold aloft the torch of freedom handed to them by the Raja. They have not been able to complete the edifice of which he laid the foundation. That is their fault, and not the fault of the great teacher. The Brahmo Samaj is the first society in India which has consistently fought against untouchability and social and sex inequality. A true Brahmo never tolerates any kind of social oppression.

The Raja's political and religious outlook knew no bounds of race or clime. He had studied the scriptures of all religions, and had the highest respect for all of them. At the same time he had staunch faith in Hinduism. What he was opposed to was blind superstition and unreasoning prejudice. The great principle of the Brahmo Samaj and of its founder is the realisation of the true

*Former Professor, Punjab University, Lahore,

spirit of Brotherhood of Man. The Raja laid well and truly the foundation of freedom in India—social, religious and political—and it is for the people of India today to realise the significance of that freedom.

I have been acquainted with the works and activities of the Raja for the last half a century, but I can truly say that my respect and admiration for the Raja have grown year after year. The more I think of the principles of his life and his many-sided activities, the better I am able to understand and realize his title to give his name to a new epoch.

The Raja may fitly be called a "Barrier-breaker". He pulled down the barriers that divide race from race, religion from religion, and one type of civilization and culture from other types. But his mission was not confined merely to the work of pulling down barriers. That would have been only a negative work. He did the Positive work of the intermingling of those that were previously divided from one another. In other words, he was a reconciler of apparently divergent races, religions, civilizations and cultures.

Rammohan Roy studied the Quran in the original Arabic, the Vedas and Upanishads in the original Sanskrit, the Old Testament in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. More than this. In order to understand those great religious works thoroughly, he made a wide and intimate acquaintance with the literature of the period during which the sacred books had been written in those languages. He was thus able to enter into the spirit of the teachings of the Quran, the Vedas and the Old and New Testaments. He could interpret the essential teachings of all those great faiths, and reconcile them with one another. According to him all religions were true, for they all taught the central doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man. For him, the service of humanity was in a real, sense the service of God. It was on such a broad and liberal basis that he founded the Brahmo Samaj, as the Trust Deed of the Samaj says, for "strengthening the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds." He condemned caste on moral, religious and above all, on political grounds, for he said that so long as India was cut up into castes, there could be no Indian nation.

It was in the fitness of things that such a man should become the Founder of Comparative Religion. As Prof. Sir Monier Williams says, "The Raja was the first earnest-minded investigator

of the Science of Comparative Religion that the world had produced." Prof. Max Muller bears a similar generous testimony to Rammohan's claim, not only as the founder of Comparative Religion, but as the interpreter and the reconciler of the West to the East. He says, "Rammohan Roy was the first to complete a connected life-current between the East and the West". According to Max Muller, he was "the inspired engineer, in the land of faith, that cut the channel of communication, the spiritual Suez, between sea and sea, land-locked in the rigid sectarianism of exclusive revelation and set their separate surges of national life into one mighty world-current of universal humanity."

It should never be forgotten that during the early years of Rammohan Roy the cry of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" was in the air. The French Revolution had taken place some years earlier, and the great levelling doctrine was making a powerful appeal to people all over the world. At the same time Payne's book, *The Rights of Man*, had come out. Rammohan Roy, who was in touch with the thought-currents of Europe, could not have remained uninfluenced.

The scheme of New India that he sketched out and helped to build up, was, therefore, a scheme based on Liberty, Equality and Fraternity in all departments of life; but its key-stone was, as I have pointed out before, the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man. It was on this key-stone that the whole grand edifice of New India was supported.

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MAKER OF MODERN INDIA

SAROJINI NAIDU

Ancient India had said "Come to me one, come to me all. I am a hostess, who gives hospitality to all, by my spirit, by my soul." When India ceased to be the hostess which she was in her past, she became manacled and fettered; and she had to take upon herself the shame and humiliation that her own children put upon her, leaving her unable to break the shackles of serfdom.

In that dark period of India's degradation there came a New Star. A poetess has said, "Before the star was born, the whole world said, The ancient stars grow dim, and announce the approach of a new star." And when the New Star did come, there was the illumination of hope again in the darkness of India. That Star was Raja Rammohan Roy. With him came back to India the fulfilment of her ancient ideals, transmuted for the purposes of the modern age. He looked around him and said, "Is this my inheritance ? The whole world inherited in the past the treasures of my country—her culture and her spiritual achievements,—and is my legacy only a serfdom, a living tomb, which I shall carry like a snail on my back, with a debris of ancient superstitions, ignorance and slavery ?" So he took upon himself to break the shackles from the feet of India, and to teach her once again her own ancient Mantra that life is based on Unity, that Truth is the only religion which can be sub-divided and limited, which cannot be betrayed and violated by separateness and internecine war. And so he said, "Let there be Truth in India, as once there was Truth in India."

The earlier prophets, Chaitanya and others, had preached Love and preached Truth, and now and then India had turned a little in her sleep, and remembered her own ancient ideals. But this dynamic man did not come with a suppliant hand, but with a sword to make wide awake the slumbering spirit of the country. He said, "Is India only for the Hindus ? Is not our civilisation greatly enriched by all those whom India has given shelter ? The Muslims who came as traders, or as plunderers with trampling armies, the Zoroastrians who came from far-off Persia—are not they also now the children of 'Bharatmata' ? Are not the Christians (who accept and yet daily deny the Oriental Christ) also the children of India, having been rebaptised in the Ganges water ? And therefore, India should try to reform herself by co-ordination and unification."

This is the message of Raja Rammohan Roy. Patriot that he was, he was not like us a narraw patriot. He was the first great modern International Ambassador. He was the one who united the people of Asia by his sympathetic scholarship and study of various cultures. Persian, Arabic, Hebrew—all these languages were like Saraswati on his tongue. He took to Europe the wrongs of his people, but not in bitterness. He carries them to victory by the majesty of his genius, the reasonableness of his pleading, and above all by the righteousness of his cause. He said to the world abroad, "Come to India. She is still the hostess, broken though she be, plundered though she be by every kind of foreign exploitation, including your own exploitation, you people of the West, you are nonetheless welcome within the borders of my home".

He said to the people of India, "If you remain separate one from the other, if you are divided in your own home, if you are like a boat whose planks are all riven asunder, how shall you give potency to the message of India to the world ? If there are those whom you look down upon, how shall they become your own ? If there are those whom you will not touch, how will you hold them in your embrace ? If you are afraid, how can you conquer your enemy ? If you are untrue yourself, how shall you be the evangelist of truth ?" This is the message Rammohan Roy gave to India; and this is the message which the great successor of Rammohan Roy, Dr. Tagore, the next International Ambassador of India's culture and genius, has said to you : "In unity and unity alone lies the salvation of India."

The Poet said to you in the name of Raja Rammohan that though more than a century has passed since he died, he still continues to be the great examplar of today, the great exponent of our needs of today; for in him were reposed all the great intellectual and spiritual qualities, ideals and virtues, which we consider to belong peculiarly to our modern generation, but which, being the evolution of the Truth, are really eternal, whether enunciated more than a century ago by Raja Rammohan Roy, the Maker of Modern India, or by Mahatma Gandhi, her great Apostle of today.

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RAMMOHUN ROY : A REASSESSMENT

SURANJAN CHATTERJEE

The traditional historians suffering from a 'pro-imperialist' bias eulogised Rammohun Roy as the 'father of Modern India' for generating progressive social and religious reforms and laying first the foundations of political movement.[1] In the wake of a radical leftist movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s and their condemnation of Rammohun Roy, historians have started questioning the Raja's role. Quite surprisingly, R.C. Majumdar, who was much imbued in Hindu obscurantist ideology, refused to accept Rammohun as the pioneer of such a movement.[2] This initiated further enquiries leading to the emergence of two conflicting interpretations. The liberals argued that inspite of Rammohun Roy's sincere desires for modernization of and elevation Hindu society from 'backwardness', he failed to understand the constraints inherent in such movements in a colonial political economy. And hence, we see in Rammohun Roy the contradictions between modern thoughts and 'backward linkages'.[3] Another view labelled him as an agent of colonial rule.[4] `ut of these conflicting interpretations, however, new evidences have come to light. The need for another article arises from the failure of above historians to develop an integrated 'world-view' of Rammohun Roy and appreciate it in the perspective of his own age and the bearing it still has on persent society. Cristopher Hill had pertinently pointed out : "History has to be re-written in every generation, because although the past does not change the present does; each generation asks new questions of the

past, and finds new areas of sympathy as it relieves different aspects of the experiences of its predecessors."[5]

I. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COLONIALISM

The objectives of the colonial government were to extract the maximum revenue from land and create a class of dependable properties intermediaries who would serve the colonial power and their objectives as subordinate partners. Considerable time was wasted to discover the most effective means for the above ends. The *izaradari* system had unleashed a wave of violence in the countryside as the new revenue-farmers speculated on profit erroneously.[6] This happens when elements foreign to the requirement of the agrarian economy are given the powers to regulate the economic functions. Fortunately, it was discontinued Eventually, the permanent settlement of 1793 was seen as the most efficient and effective means of securing both the objectives.[7]

It was hoped that granting of 'the magic touch of property' to the zamindars would rehabilitate agricultural production and secure the 'surplus' for the government. Henry Pattullo had rightly observed that, by the granting of proprietory right the zamindars' "fidelity and attachment would thereby likewise be forever secured against all enemies, in defence of property."[8] In practice, however, the high revenue demand ruined many big and small zamindars. The purchasers of their estates sold by auction were mostly urban and rural moneocrats, whose links with land were either remote or altogether absent.[9]

A new epoch thus began, the epoch of waning interests of zamindars in further productive investment in land. The only difficulty of collecting rents from the peasants who removed by Regulations VII—1799 and V—1812. The government's motives behind 'these regulations were : to give powers to the zamindars over their peasants in matters of rent-arrears, which in effect means to ensure the governments' absorption of surplus from land; and secondly, such powers and aid to the zamindars would secure their attachment to the state, and would improve the attractiveness of land as a rent-earning asset. The one great advantage of the permanent settlement, Bentinck truly admitted, was its creation of a vast body of rich landed proprietors, "deeply interested in the continuance of the British dominion."[10]

The permanent settlement had failed to improve existing method and techniques of agricultural production.[11] The increasing burden of rent left with the peasantry increasingly less incentive to improve the condition of production with their capital. With rare exceptions the zamindars had become pure rentiers, an estimate of increase in rent between 1793 and 1880 revealed a range between 120 and 180 per cent for several districts of Bengal.[12] The permanent settlement, wrote the Governer-General, Lord Moira, on 31st December 1819 : "has to our painful knowledge subjected almost the whole of the lower classes throughout these provinces to most grievous oppression—an oppression, too, so guaranteed by our pledge that we are unable to relieve the sufferers."[13] E. Colebrooke, in his evidence before the Select Committee of 1831-32, said : "the errors of the permanent settlement in Bengal were two-fold : first, in the sacrifice of what may be dominated the yeomanry, by merging all village rights, whether of property or occupancy, in the all devouring recognition of the zamindar's paramount property in the soil; and, secondly, in the sacrifice of the peasantry by one sweeping enactment, which left the zamindar to make his settlement with them on such terms as he might choose to require. Government, indeed, reserved to itself the power of legislating in favour of the tenants; but no such legislation has ever taken place; and, on the contrary, every subsequent enactment has been founded on the declared object of strengthening the zamindar's hand."[14] Marshman, one of the editors of the *Friend of India*, also asserted the same thing.[15]

The diminishing involvement in any productive investment coupled with the growing interests in land as only a rent-earning asset, accelerated the process of vertical sub-infeudation of landed rights. Such a non-productive process came to be legally sanctioned by the Patni Regulation VIII of 1819.[16] Thus, surplus extracted from the peasantry was distributed over an immense variety of intermediary tenures, the zamindar and the government. In some districts of Bengal as many as 50 or more intermediate interests were created.[17] Although the zamindars had their wastelands reclaimed almost gratis, whatever capital they expended in settling reclaimers were realised with interest through enhanced rents and various abwabs. Hence, a process of deterioration in the agrarian economy had set in.

Comparative changes also occurred in the industrial sector of

Bengal economy. Since the beginning of the 19th century, Britain's relation with her colony reflected an adjustment of mercantile capitalism to the needs of the industrial capitalists at home. The consequences were the control of labour process and production of specific commodities of business interests like indigo and opium and the ruin of many traditional productions. Simultaneously was at work the old principle of mercantilism, plunder and drain of wealth from the colony.[18]

Cotton manufactures of Bengal were the first to receive Lancashire's thrust. Larkins observed : "the weavers finding no employment for their looms, many of them have been necessitated to quit their homes and seek employment elsewhere; most of them take to the plough, some remain in their own districts, while others migrate into distant parts of the country."[19] District towns of Burdwan and Midnapore, like Khirpai, Kharar and Kalna, which were mainly cotton-weaving centres were ruined.[20] Taylor reported the same ruin and impoverishment of Dacca muslim weavers, evident from the decline in *Chowkidaree* tax from Rs. 31,500 to Rs. 10,000 between 1814 and 1838.[21] It was the combination of a policy of coercive control over the producers, prohibitory duties adversely related to indigenous commodities, and the obvious superiority of quality and price of Lancashire cotton pieces which combinedly account for such a devastating destruction.[22] Although the silk manufactures of Bengal escaped ruin during the period under scrutiny, Bentinck had correctly foreseen that it would not withhold destruction for too long.[23] During the same period, coercive control over production and marketing of commodities like opium and raw-silk, created much resentment among the producers.[24]

Similar was the plight of the salt manufacturers. The officers of the Salt Department admitted this manufacture to be a source of great misery to the molungis, in particular, as they were forced into Company's service. Being indebted to the Company inextricably and for life, they were virtual slaves.[25] Occasionaly, the molungis refused to work for the Company and resisted their control.[26] Rammohun Roy realized the situation, and in his evidence before the Select Committee he pleaded for Company's complete monopoly and import of salt into Bengal.[27] The Government took appropriate steps : the prices of Bengal salt was artificially kept upto the advantage of British producers in a

competitive market and ruin native production. As a consequence, approximately 6 lakhs of molungis lost their profession.[28] Lord Dalhousie admitted that this disaster was due to the above policy.[29]

This process of 'de-industrialisation' coupled with an emerging crisis in the agrarian economy, and the new investment policy, had considerable influences over the course of growth of the new Bengali middle-class. Measures had already been taken to increase the attractiveness of landed property as a rent-earning asset. Henceforth, there was no appearance of entrepreneurs willing to risk their capital in small industrial enterprises. The development of industrial capitalism in England sounded the death-knell of the Agency Houses functioning in the colonies as appendages to mercantile capitalism, and in which many early Bengali moneocrats had invested their capital. As far instance, the sudden demand from the House of Cockerell and Trail, the biggest creditor of Palmer and Co., to liquidate immediately half of the debt, in 1830, caused the fall of Palmer and Co.[30] The withdrawal of creditors within the Agency Houses in the new circumstances diverted native trading capital to land and to rural moneylending.[31]

To sum up, in a colonial economy the mechanism of control over the economy is principally political. Control over the production of requisite export-oriented commodities both in its raw and manufactured state, and distribution of home-manufactured commodities in the colonial market were manoeuvered by business houses and various native intermediaries. Through its control over the state machinery the Company effectively aided the entire process of economic control. The permanent settlement, on the other hand, infused new life into the decaying feudalism of Bengal. The granting of proprietory right to land, absolute powers to extract rents from the peasants, and the gradual process of transference of traditional rural responsibilities of the landed proprietors to the government, and the legal recognition of the *patni* system, created a class of unproductive proprietors. Land had become a rent-receiving asset along with the functions of absentee-landlordism, the salient feature of neo-feudalism—the pillar on which the roof of the colonial regime rested. A system which owed its birth to the colonial rule was loyal to the state policies. And that explains why the *bhadralok*-feudals of Bengal never gave due attention to the destructive economic policies of imperialism. Hence, to these neo-

social position. The Mutiny at Vellore and an increasing popular unrest in Bengal had confirmed Bentinck that social and administrative reforms were necessary to weld the society and help state control. The Charter Acts of 1813 and 1833 enlightened Bentinck[33] :

> "Our character is no longer the inconsistent one of merchant and sovereign . . . our future care is that of a vast territory cursed from one end to the other by vices, the ignorance, the oppression, the despotism, the barbarous and often cruel customs that have been the growth of ages under every description of Asiatic misrule—the moral regeneration of this immense mass of our fellow creatures—the communication to them [of] the blessings of the European condition, in knowledge, in domestic comfort, in security of person and property, in independence, in morals."

The objective of English education was explicitly stated by Trevelyan. The educated classes would realise the need of acquiring and diffusing European knowledge for naturalising European institutions on Indian soil in the interest of their own stability, and for that purpose they would have to seek government protection. Naturally, this would serve the purpose of the Empire and the beneficiaries of English education.[34] The Christian missionaries were already in the field to implement such a programme.[35] Interference in Hindu society was intended to create tastes and develop values which would feed the manufacturing interests of Britain, and strengthen in Bengali mind the need for the Empire and its partisan liberalism. Secondly, the benefits of reform would be limited to the upper-crust of the Hindu Society.

In fact, the British had stigmatised the whole nation as unworthy of trust, incapable of honourable conduct and fit to be employed only in menial situation. The Cornwallis system was calculated to debase the upper gentry fallen under Company's domination.[36] These debased neo-feudals uncritically emulated the imperialist doctrine of India's social backwardness and degradation in morals and values.[37]

However, the differences among the neo-feudal class led to the formation of *dals* (groups) and their respective *dalapatis* (group leaders). There were two factors which created the *dals* and

accelerated mutual antagonism. First, though European thought had influenced the neo-feudal class, their non-productive activities developed in them a curious culture which was a peculiar blending of parochial feudal values with a veneer of European material and cultural traits.[38] Hence, this class of collaborators were culturally, though not politically, alienated from their masters. Caste institutions and orthodoxy were retained. These *dals*, comprising mostly and dominated by the higher castes, were divided along caste lines.[39] Often the dominant castes in a *dal* recruited less inferior castes to strengthen the *dal*; on the other hand, the inferior castes used these *dals* as their vehicles of social elevation. The *Atmiya Sabha*, for instance, was controlled by the Brahmin caste, while the Kayasthas and Vaidyas were in control of the *Dharma Sabha*. Secondly, the government's new policy of interference in Hindu society bred mixed responses, which crystallized into and provided an orientation to the programme of the various *dals*. Radhakanta Deb and his followers were keen on separating their religion from secular activities; he, for instance, agreed to work with the School Book Society, provided no religious matter was introduced into their publication.[40]

In point of comparison, the so-called 'conservatives' were no less liberal in matters concerning English education and uplift of the status of women. Bishop Heber observed on Radhakanta Deb that he speaks English well and has read many of our popular authors particularly historical and geographical.[41] He was the Director of the Hindu College and championed the cause of social amelioration of women. Contradistinctly, the so-called 'liberals' were not sincerely devoted to a 'modern ideology'. Inspite of the *Atmiya Sabha's* repeated stress on Vedantic monotheism. Prosanna Kumar Tagore performed the family Durga Punja with all traditional celebrities. Similarly, Dwarkanath Tagore and Rammohun Roy donated gifts to the Brahmans, who had maintained the sacredness of their caste, and gave feast to the Chaubeys in Brindaban.[42] The essential difference, thus, lay in necessity and non-necessity of government interference in Hindu religion and custom. We would see later how much traditional was Rammohun Roy who sincerely believed that the organisation of society depended on religion and a solution of which would elevate the society and create a working harmony for the stability of the Empire.[43]

Opposed to both these dominant *dals* were the Derozians. Over a short span of time, Derozia and his pupils came above their caste hankerings and could look down upon Hindu society and represents a 'modern' view.[44] Rammohun Roy and his *dal* were criticized by them for an utterly *confused* stand and *sheer opportunism.*[45] Hindu religion was denounced as vile and corrupt and unworthy of the regards of rational beings.[46] They pleaded for a programme of secular liberal education to uplift the Indians. However, Derozia failed to understand the society and diffuse his *radical* doctrine among the masses and mobilize them for a more wider movement.[47]

The political movements of the lower castes and classes in rural and urban centres was seriously disturbing the peace of the *bhadraloks* or the new feudal class. The strike of the Oriya palki bearers in 1872 for cancellation of their badges and higher wages was viewed by them as drainage of money from Bengal.[48] Similarly, the strike of the washermen for higher wages was a threat to their social comfort.[49] In fact, the *bhadraloks* seriously detested education to the mases for it would enlighten the lower classes and make them more conscious of their rights. Vidyasagar wrote to the government of Bengal :[50]

> "As the best, if not the only practicable means of promoting education in Bengal, the government should, in my humble opinion, confine itself to the education of the higher classes on a comprehensive scale."

The training of the *bhadraloks* in English education and political philosophy under the patronage of the Raj contributed their *indifference* towards the actual conditions of life of the labouring people and their *struggle for existence.* The mutiny of the native infantry at Barrackpore[51]; protest of the artisans against Company's control and injudicious prices[52]; increasing peasant rebellions and rural crimes[53]; formation of new religious sects among the lower classes and their denunciation of 'caste toboos' and struggle for higher social status[54]; and growing crimes in Calcutta[55]—were disturbances in the otherwise peaceful life of the *bhadraloks.*

The political and religious movements were working under certain constraints. Inspite of certain common elements in the

movements, the zeal to combine was absent. The requisite leadership and ideology were lacking, without which no movement achieve success. Nevertheless, the class-struggle of the exploited masses in whatever form was seriously disturbing the peace of the imperialists and their subordinate collaborators. Government policies emanated from this environment, of which Rammohun Roy was a product and a participant.

Rammohun Roy's stress on 'religion' was not surprising. He understood that, religion and caste were still an important emotional force in either uniting or disuniting the social forces. Religion was his prescription for *strengthening the empire*.[56] The appeal to elevate *self-consciousness* turned out to be an utopia. Only changes in the material world,[57] which generated the parochial values of the society, could transform the existing values.[58]

III. SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF RAMMOHUN ROY

Rammohun Roy was born into a Radi Kulina Brahmin family of respectability and great religious heritage from both paternal and maternal sides, which combined business with piety.[59] Brajabinode, grandfather of Rammohun Roy and an influential zamindar, held an important portfolio during the administration of Alivardi Khan and received rewards for his services.[60] The family fortunes, however, sunk after the decline of Nawabi aristocracy, only to emerge again under the Company's farming system. This re-emergence was based on land exploitation in collaboration with the Company and on the destruction of the local political power of the Sadgops and Bagdis—thus, the reformer's *respectability* owed to his family's participation with the Company in the destruction of the old Mughal rural gentry.[61]

In May 1791, Ramkanta Roy, father of Rammohun Roy, took *izara* of the pargana of Bhursoot for 9 years whose annual *sadar jama* was assessed at Rs. 1,01,389.[62] In 1794, an important *taluq* called Harirampur in Chitwa pargana was brought at a revenue sale in the name of Jagamohun Roy, brother of Rammohun Roy.[63] At an early age Rammohun learned the art of estate management in his father's *taluqs*[64] along with the learning of Arabic and Persian languages, which were the requisite qualification for getting state services during the early phase of Company's rule. During this period, Rammohun Roy's attitude towards the Company was an 'aversion'.[65] This feeling changed

when business transactions and official engagements brought him closer to the European gentlemen.

Independent of his proprietory interests, Rammohun Roy was engaged in money-lending business. In 1797, he left Langulpara for Calcutta to extend his business activities there. Golaknarayan Sarkar carried his work in the city as an appointed clerk. He lent Rs. 7,500 to Andrew Ramsay of the Company's Civil Service.[66] His motive behind money-lending to civil servants, in particular, was that,

> "Natives not having any hope of attaining direct consideration from the Government by their merits or exertions, are sometimes *induced to accommodate* the civil servants with *money*, by the hope of *securing their patronage* for their friends and relatives, the judges and others having many situations directly or indirectly in their gift; sometimes by the hope of benefiting by their friendly disposition, when the natives have estate under their jurisdiction and sometimes to avoid incurring the hostility of the judge. . . ."[67]

This statement clearly reveals the real motive of great reformer.

By the *haptam* regulation of 1799, land was steadily becoming an asset.[68] In 1799, Rammohun Roy bought two *taluqs*—Gobindapur in Jahanabad pargana, and Rameshwarpur in Chandrakona pargana—both in Burdwan district for a total sums of Rs. 4,350. The income from these estates was Rs. 5,500 annually.[69] This thrust for land was continued. Between 1803-04 and 1809-10, four more *patni taluqs*—Langulpara, Birluk, Krishnanagar and Srirampur—were purchased, which combinedly yielded him an annual income of Rs. 5,000 or Rs. 6,000.[70] Money was also invested in the Agency House of Mackintosh and Co., and in the purchase of Company's paper.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this part of our argument. First, his caste respectability and strong thrust for property infused into his thoughts a strong property consciousness. This feature caused his indifference when the old gentry collapsed under the racking revenue assessments of the Company government.[71] Secondly, the permanent settlement and the regulations which

followed secured his proprietory right and his other businesses. This made him indebted to the British Rule.

The permanent settlement had created tensions in the countryside. Rammohun Roy had witnessed peasant movements against the Company and the zamindars, which seriously disturbed the infant empire of the Company and the neo-feudal class. The members of Rammohun Roy's *Atmiya Sabha*—Dwarkanath Tagore, Prasanna K. Tagore, Kaleenath Roy, Baikunta Nath Munshi, Raja Kali Shankar Ghosal, Kasi Nath Mullick, Hurrchunder Ghose—were all large proprietors. Rammohun Roy's reform movement emanated from the crisis of a class, which was also self-divided due to a sectarian ideology, on which the foundation of an infant empire and the security of a class largely depended. Colonel Young, a disciple of Bentham, observed :

> "For he (Rammohun) is greatly attached to us and our regime. . .because he considers the contact of our superior race with his degraded and inferior countrymen as the only means and chance they have of improving themselves in knowledge and energy."[72]

From his social position Rammohun Roy realised that reforms were a *necessity* to preserve the alien empire and the security of his class.

IV. PEASANT RESISTANCE AND RAMMOHUN'S REACTIONS

Rammohun Roy thanked God for "having unexpectedly delivered this country from the long continued tyranny of its former rulers and placed it under the Government of the English, a nation who not only are blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty, but also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social happiness, as well as free enquiry into liberty and religious subjects, among those nations to which that influence extends."[73] A gross distortion of reality. Lenin wrote that, "practice is higher than (theoretical) knowledge, for it has not only the dignity of universality, but also of immediate actuality."[74] The more colonialism entrenched in Bengal the greater was the intensity and extensity of

peasant violence against the zamindars, money-lenders and their colonial masters.[75]

In 1831, peasants of Barasat and adjoining areas, only 30 miles aways from Rammohun's Calcutta residence, led an armed upsurge against the zamindars and the Raj. The peasants knew why and for what they were fighting. To Rammohun Roy, the peasants were utterly ignorant of and indifferent to the past and present system of administration. Only those who had become rich through the business, and others who were enjoying their privileges through the 'permanent settlement' had realised the importance of British domination.[76] Another incident would highlight his involvement. One Ramjoy Batabyal, a resident of the village of Ramnagar near Krishnanagar, was violently deprived of his landed property by Rammohun Roy. He threatened the latter's house with 4 to 5 thousand of his followers, threw stones, and filed a suit against him for looting his field and garden. The Hooghly Court found Rammohun Roy guilty and fined him Rs. 2,092.[77] Rammohun Roy perpetrated his various acts of oppression in his own estates through Jagannath Majumdar, his faithful naib. In the section following our purpose is to analyse the reformer's attitude towards indigo cultivation.

Indigo cultivation was not new to Bengal agriculturists, but its extension owed to the demand of the Company. To the Company's servants indigo was the most advantageous mode of remitting their fortunes to Europe, and the textile manufacturers' demand for the commodity for 'dyeing' purpose gave them the opportunity.[78] Possessing capital and requisite skill, the indigo planters forced the peasants to cultivate indigo : "the contract for the growth and production of the plant, so far from being voluntary, is forced upon the ryot, who is compelled by more or less of pressure to accept advances; that these advances are rarely given, or are not given in full after the first year or two; that the ryot is compelled to plough, sow, and weed his land, and to cut and cart the plant, at times when he would prefer being engaged in the cultivation of other crops of superior profit. . ."[79] Turnbull, the Magistrate of Nadia, reported that the contract with the ryot is "frequently insufficiently defined and is generally extremely unfavourable to the ryot."[80] The cultivation of indigo was detrimental to the economic interests of the peasants, because they received *unfair* prices compared to other commodities.[81] The Court of Directors also confirmed this

fact : "the ryots are to a great extent oppressed and defrauded, if not by indigo plants themselves, by agents employed by them, acting in their names and for their advantage. . .the chief actors in which are hired men, engaged by the planters for the express purpose of enforcing their claims in defiance of the law. These facts are affirmed even by those who have borne strong testimony to the personal good character of the planter."[82] The ryots often complained that they were unable to free themselves from the planters even after clearing all debts and advances.[83] Lord Macaulay admitted that "many ryots have been brought, partly by the operation of the law and partly by acts committed in defiance of the law into a state not very far removed from that of predial slavery."[84] Tbe peasants refused to cultivate indigo :

> "I will die sooner than cultivate indigo—I would rather go to a country where the indigo plant is never seen or sown—Rather than sow indigo I will go to another country, I would rather beg than sow indigo."[85]

Also, the manner in which the indigo-planters settle themselves in the countryside antagonised the zamindars. Tenants were often driven away from the control of the local zamindars for the cultivation of indigo.[86] With government assistance the planters could easily apply force to secure their objectives.[87]

That the extension of indigo culture was pernicious to the peasants in particular was contradicted by Rammohun Roy :

> "As to the indigo planters, I beg to observe that I have travelled through several districts in Bengal and Bihar, and I found the natives residing in the neighbourhood of indigo plantations evidently better-clothed and better conditioned than those who live at a distance from such stations. There may be some partial injury done by the indigo-planters; but on the whole, they have performed more good to the generality of the natives of his country than any other class of Europeans whether in or out of the service.[88]

In a letter to Nathaniel Alexander, Rammohun Roy further observed that "the advances made to the ryots by the indigo-planters have increased in most factories in consequence of the price

of indigo having risen, and in many, better prices than formerly are allowed to for the plant."[89] The 'advances' to individual peasants may have increased marginally but their conditions did not improve. The growth-cycle of indigo prevented double-cropping with rice.[90] The shift from production for subsistence to production for market forced the peasants to helpless situations : dependence on market for purchasing subsistence commodities at a higher price and compulsion to sell his own commodity at a dictated price.[91] Rammohun Roy overlooked the actual effects of indigo-culture on the peasantry and failed to correct his assessments, from a study of the indigo-peasants' movements.

Why did he foster such a false notion ? As an 'interpreter' between the ruler and the ruled he should have pointed out the sources of contradiction to the government for a 'check'. His reasons were well calculated. The indigo-planters were men of 'capital' and 'energy' and the Bengali comprador entrepreneurs sincerely hoped that colonisation of indigo-planters would lead to an import of capital, which might ease the financial crisis of the Agency Houses and the various collaboration companies in Bengal. To Rammohun Roy, *money consciousness* was important and sometimes became more important than the objective of reform.

V. RAMMOHUN ROY ON COLONIALISM

A dinner was given in honour of Rammohun Roy on 6th July 1831 at the city of London Tavern by same officials of the East India Company. Speaking before the select audience Rammohun Roy said :

> "Before the period at which India had become tributary to Great Britain it was the scene of the most frequent and bloody conflicts. In the various provinces of the Eastern dominions, nothing was to be seen but plunder and devastation, there was no security for property or for life, until by the interference of this country the great sources of discord were checked, education has advanced, and the example of the British system of dominion had a conciliating effect upon the natives of the east."[92]

In other words, nothing pertaining to the rule of law ever

prevailed in pre-British India; crime was rampant and anarchy was the rule.[93] No researches till date support this view for the eastern provinces upto 1740 after which the Company itself became a participant in the internal struggles. The man who stood "at the fountain-head of modern thought and life in India"[94] purposely upheld a false notion. The reasons have been explained, and Rammohun Roy himself had clarified the point :

> "I first saw and began to associate with Europeans, and soon after made myself tolerably aquainted with their laws and form of government. Finding them generally more intelligent, more steady and moderate in their conduct, I gave up my prejudice against them, and became inclined in their favour, feeling persuaded that their rule, though a foreign yoke, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of the native inhabitants. . .'"[95]

The Bengal Herald owned by his friends explains this above argument. An English educated landed gentry is "placed between the aristocracy and the poor, and are daily forming a most influential class. Previous to their formation, the wealth of the country was in the hands of a few individuals, while all others were dependent on them, and the bulk of the people were in a state of abject poverty of mind and body which will perhaps form a juster reason for the pervading moral bondage of the Hindoos."[96] Again, "whenever such an order of men have been created, freedom has followed in its train."[97] A correct lesson from history. But, these were not the men in whose train freedom could follow. The Company governments' economic and social policies had created enough room for their alienation from actual productive work : these were parasites and an unproductive social force in the nineteenth century society of Bengal. In Europe, things were different and conditions matured differently.[98]

However, the argument of Rammohun and the 'Bengal Herald' exhibits the impact of European liberalism.[99] There sincere objective was to create an *environment* where *social harmony* would be the supreme law, and only a thorough process of judicial arbitration could create the atmosphere of social harmony. His evidences before the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1831 bear ample testimony to his argument.

Replying to a question of what *methods* the landed proprietors do adopt for realizing their rent arrears, Rammohun Roy said that by applications to the police the moveable property of the peasants was alienated and by the ordinary judicial process the immovable property of the peasant was alienated.[100] The 'Bengal Hurkaru' seriously critised this observation :

> "How could Rammohun Roy . . . forget the seventh Regulation of 1799 ? . . . How could Rammohun Roy forget to state that it is through, and by, a frightful power (arrest . . .) and no other, that rents are raised; that Moroosi (hereditary) pottahs are forcibly taken from Kodkhast ryots, and Meadee pottahs (pottahs for a term of years) substituted for them; so as eventually to make the whole of their tenants almost tenants at will, and enable the Zamindars, through the authority of the gulled Cornwallis Government, who supposed they would 'endeavour to promote the welfare and prosperity of their tenantry, to rack them to their last rupee."[101]

Rammohun Roy's reply was from reality; but his emphasis rested on the importance of the judiciary. He repeatedly pleaded for an effective reorganisation of the rural courts so as to guard against frequent unrests among the peasantry, the khudkhasts in particular.[102] He had realised that the peasants were impoverished by the high rents, but pleaded that the burden of land revenue on the zamindars was excessively high and a reduction of revenue would automatically reduce the tolal rent imposed on him.[103] This was again factually incorrect, but his *money consciousness* prevented him from revealing the truth.[104]

Moreover, he argued that landlords in the permanently settled areas were firmly attached to the government. This could not be said of landlords in Madras or the Conquered Upper Provinces.[105] If the permanent settlement had been extended to all regions and all classes, similar relations would have emerged.[106] Internal and external security would have been assured 'without the necessity of keeping on foot an immense standing army at an enormous cost.'[107] The example of Ireland was given in the *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, where the evils of absenteeism and the injustice of maintaining Protestants clergymen out of revenues wrung from the Roman Catholic inhabitants had caused much discontent.[108] To the *reformer*, the

key to the consolidation of the British Rule was the uplift of the Hindus from moral degradation and a patient hearing to their grievances.

Rammohun Roy believed that, scientific and liberal English education of the Western type would uplift the people from moral degradation The Fort William College established in 1800 by Lord Wellesley with the purpose "to fix sound and correct principles of religion and government in their minds at an early period of life was best security which could be provided for the stability of British power in India."[109] The *reformer* apprehended the colonial objective and advised accordingly. When the Sanskrit College was about to be established, Rammohun wrote (the most unquoted portion of his letter to Lord Amherst) :

> "We now find that the government are establishing a Sanskrit School under Hindu pundits to impart such knowledge as is already current in India. This Seminary can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practicable use to the possessors or to the society."[110]

A deeper intimacy with the traditional Sanskrit learning would divert the entire efforts of the colonial government to the wrong track of traditionalism and division among the subjects. Improvement of the subjects from speculative philosophies, like Vedanta, Mimangsa and Nyay Shastras, was impossible.[111] These arguments seem to locate the *reformer's* sympathy for scientific and liberal education.

In reality, Rammohun Roy practised Lord Wellesley's directive. He was disgusted and grew suspicious of the radicalism and secular knowledge taught to the students of Hindu College. The Derozians had condemned the principles and practices of Hindu religion as vile and corrupt and unworthy of the regard of the rational beings.[112] In 1822, Rammohun Roy opened an Anglo-Indian School for imparting education in *English.* Religious and moral instructions formed part of the curriculum. William Adam commented in 1827 that "the doctrines of Christianity are not inculcated, but the duties of morality are carefully enjoined, and the facts belonging to the history of Christianity are taught to these pupils who are capable of understanding general history."[113] In

1827, the Vedanta College was established. The object was to explain the teachings of Vedanta through which his countrymen could be led out of their prevailing superstitions and idolatry into pure and elevated theism.[114] When Alexander Duff approached him for establishing missionary schools, he expressed his approval and worked hard to make it a success.[115] To the *reformer*, education was to be based on religion and morality the objective being not simply providing students with information but rendering education itself practically useful to individuals and society as a whole. Speculative Vedantic philosophy, in itself, had little meaning for him. English education along these lines would bridge the communication gap between the rulers and the ruled.

In fact, he prepared the path for Macaulay's famous minute on education : "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect."[116] The "Sumbad Bhuskar's" article explained the extent of the achievement in this direction :

> "The wealthy and influential classes of the people of this country ought at once to feel the truth of the remark that the king protects the people, whenever any danger threatens them, and that without the protecting care and vigilence of the former, the latter can save neither their lives, nor wealth, nor caste, nor honour. The truth of this observation has long ago been proclaimed in our moral Shastras . . ."[117]

From the argument it emerges that attachment to the shastras and caste, were retained though attachment to the rulers and a taste for foreign commodities also developed : a peculiar blending of feudal and bourgeois values. However, the influences of educational institutions were so narrowly confind in its spread effect that the 'benefits' which Rammohun Roy aspired for could not be attained. In the *mofussil* there reigned deep and dense ignorance.[118]

The *reformer* knew this and desired that educated persons of *character* and *capital* should be permitted to settle in India without any restriction.[119] This might mitigate the shortcomings of the former process. The colonisation of India by Europeans from

respectable and intelligent class,[120] would improve the Indians from the age-old bondage of ignorance, would raise them in wealth and thereby a mixed community in the pattern of Canada would be formed, who would "feel no disposition to cut off its connection with England."[121] Sir John Malcolm pointed out that "colonisation is one of the most likely means for the civilization of India", because the commerce of the country would be lucrative and the value of land would increase.[122] Rammohun Roy's argument was similar : a villager would approve colonisation because it would raise their wages.[123]

The desire of a section of the educated Indians for an European settlement became apparent when British enterprise and exports had begun to lead the world. She was looking forward for an extensive colonial market for her own industrial commodities and also sources of supply of raw materials. Lord Bentinck argued that colonisation would result in an extensive and intensive exploitation of Bengal's natural resources, while at the same time it would promote a *welfare consciousness* among the subjects.[124] Though Rammohun Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore and their friends echoed this free-traders' argument, they had, however, a different motive. The Agency Houses, where the financial interests of these men were locked were then in a financial crisis; the settlement of Europeans with 'capital' may save the Agency Houses.[125] Rammohun Roy's participation in the Rickards sponsored first political association in India, the Commercial and Patriotic Association of 1820's, was marked by the same point of view.[126] However, the efforts failed because the demands were anachronistic compared to the changes in the production organisation in Britain : the Agency Houses fundamentally represented the interests of mercantile capitalism, though they carried over their functions in the early phases of dominance by industrial capitalism. Soon, the Managing Agency System operated to carry forward effectively the interests of industrial capitalism. Secondly, the limited colonisation by Europeans also failed to secure the objective which the Bengali 'Babus' expected it would achieve : elevation of the people from moral degradation.

Security of the alien rule and the propertied classes haunted Rammohun Roy. A free-Press, he hoped, would reveal the grievances and aspirations of the people. Knowledge of their grievances

would caution the government. In his *Appeal To the King In Ccuncil*, he wrote :

> "Free Press has never caused a revolution in any part of the world, because, while men can easily represent the grievances arising from the conduct of the local authorities to the supreme Government, and thus get them redressed, the grounds of discontent that excite revolution are removed; whereas, where no freedom of the Press existed, and grievances consequently remained unrepresented and unredressed, innumerable revolutions have taken place in all parts of the globe. . . . "[127]

In another memorial demanding the removal of obstacles to the freedom of Press, it was stated :

> "During the last wars which the British government were obliged to undertake against neighbouring Powers, it is well known, that the great body of Natives of wealth and respectability, as well as the land-holders of consequence, offered up regular prayers to the objects of their worship for the success of the British arms from a deep conviction that under the sway of that nation, their improvement, both mental and social, would be promoted, and their lives, religion and property be secured. Actuated by such feelings, even in those critical times, which are the best test of the loyalty of the subject, they voluntarily came forward with a large portion of their property to enable the British government to carry into effect the measures necessary for its own defence, considering the cause of the British as their own, and firmly believing that on its success, their own happiness and prosperity depended."[128]

Bentinck correctly realised that these educated and wealthy men of Calcutta as a body 'seem incapable of political mischief, and the public press may be said to be as innocuous as out of it.'[129] When the freedom of Press was eventually secured in 1835, Mr. Leith, in a dinner in the Town Hall on 9th February 1838, in honour of Sir Charles Metcalfe, proposed a toast to 'the memory of Rammohun Roy's;[130] it was an honour which the colonial government bestowed upon him for his faithful services.

It has been argued that love of freedom was Rammohun Roy's strongest passion. He greeted the establishment of constitutional government in Spain, welcomed the progress of South America's struggle against Spanish Empire and rejoiced at the news of the French Revolution of 1830.[131] These incidents, however, do not make us proclaim him as a champion of freedom. First, he discriminated the British from th· Spanish colonies or the British from the Spanish empire. A British colony was better off than a Spanish colony. Moreover, in his article on Ireland, he could not wholeheartedly support the Irish rebels and advised the British government on the ways and means of establishing an empire and securing it. Secondly, his sense of freedom did not work in India. He said to V. Jacquemont that 'India requires many more years of English domination so that she might not have many things to lose while she is reclaiming her political independence.'[132] It is a humiliation on the part of Indians to eulogise a person who thought in terms of positive gains from her attachment, with the British Empire. Rammohun Roy thought in terms of the class which had gained from the Empire and not in terms of the milling millions of India.

VI. RELIGIOUS REFORMS OF RAMMOHUN ROY

Rammohun Roy's first religious tract, *Tuhfut-ul- Muwahiddin*, written in 1803-04, was a product of his early wanderings and influences of Islamic thought. In its introduction, he asserted the existence of a Supreme Being who was the source of creation and the governor of the universe. On this monotheistic premise, he launched a fierce attack on all irrationalities as expounded by the *Mujtahids* (religious expounders). They 'sow the seeds of prejudice and disunion in the hearts of each other to the deprivation of eternal blessing', and 'add hundreds of useless hardships and privations regarding eating and drinking, purity and impurity, auspiciousness and inauspiciousness, etc.,' which are 'causes of injury and detrimental to social life and sources of trouble and bewilderment to the people.' These were shown to have sprung out of the self-interest of the priest feeding on mass ignorance and slavishness to habit.[133] He emphasized that, 'to believe in the real existence of anything after obtaining proofs of such existence is possible to every individual man; but to put faith in the existence

of such things as are remote from experience and repugnant to reason; is not in the power of a sensible mans;[134] in other words, why should one believe in things which are inconsistent with the laws of perception ?[135]

Thus, the crux of *Tuhuft's* logic were : the existence of one and only Supreme Being; the negative and deceptive role of all religious intermediaries between god and man; and the irrationality of knowledge which is devoid of reason and inconsistent with the laws of perception. But, with advancement in age and social awareness, he retreated from his earlier rationalism both in theory and practice. Why this transformation ?

The kernel of Rammohun Roy's subsequent religious arguments was anchored on the traditional Vedanta philosophy as interpreted by Sankaracharya. The ancient philosopher viewed the world as divided into metaphysical categories, the highest form being speculation about and unity with eternal principles. Material reality did not exist. A great historian has correctly pointed out : 'The absence of logic, contempt for mundane reality, the inability to work at manual and menial tasks, emphasis upon learning basic formulas by rote with the secret meaning to be expounded by a high guru, and respect for tradition (no matter how silly) backed by fictitious ancient authority has a devastating effect upon Indian science.'[136] Just as Sankaracharya's elusive philosophy emerged out of the social crisis of organised opposition to Brahmanism by heterodox sects, popular cults and the Buddhist philosophy[137]; Rammohun Roy's change of faith and reliance on an abstruse philosophy owed to European influences and the social crisis of his own time.

Digby, under whom he had worked for long and assisted him in his official work, was instrumental in initiating him in the Vedanta doctrine and reformation. As a student of the Fort William College and conversant with Colebrooke's researches and the Vedanta doctrine, Digby was drawn to Indian reformation. Fellow students has left evidences of this fact. His central idea was to push Rammohun Roy into the current of reforms and conflicting agitations in Culcutta so that, the latter could take charge of a ship before it drifted towards "anti-foreignism". Rammohun Roy realised "the insufficiency of human *reason* for the production of the highest moral worth and the highest happiness."[138] Credit

goes to Digby for chosing the right talent for such a magnificent task.[139] The *reformer* now evolved his "religious utilitarianism".

Sandford Arnot had observed that Rammohun Roy "became more strongly impressed with the importance of religion to the welfare of society, and the pernicious effect of skepticism. . . . He often deplored the existence of a party which had sprung up in Calcutta . . . partly composed of East Indians, partly of the Hindu youth, who from education had learnt to reject their own faith without substituting any other. These he thought more debased than the most bigotted Hindu. . . ."[140] The *reformer* strongly argued that changes should take place in their religion 'at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort'.[141] And further, the dogmatic belief in idolatry was injuring seriously the harmony of the society through 'dreadful acts of self-destruction and the immolation of the nearest relations.'[142] He admired Christian religion for "being conductive to moral principles and better adapted for the use of rational being".[143] K.C. Mitra had truly observed that 'Rammohun was a religious Benthamite and estimated different creeds existing in the world, not according to his notion of their truth or falsehood, but his notion of their utility . . .'[144] His entire religious philosophy was a shrewd manifestation of his desire to create an environment which would ensure security of the feudal class against the threat of peasant movements, to create an atmosphere of cohesiveness and awareness within the class about its own position and secure the interests of the British bourgeoisie.

He considered 'idol-worship' to the inventions[145] of the poor mind and retreats from the theology of Vedanta.[146] He realised that the parochialism of the urbanized feudals could be eradicated by a thorough criticism polytheism; but he failed to realise that in the existing social structure elevation of consciousness was impossible. Only a thorough dissolution of the pre-capitalist social structure could create the conditions for the growth of monotheism.

However, strict to his utilitarian principle, he recommended idol-worship for persons who are incapable of elevating their minds, or do not possess sufficient understanding : 'persons of feeble intellect', 'week and ignorant persons', and 'those who are incapable of adoring the invisible supreme being.'[147] In other words, his acknowledgement of the necessity of idol-worship for the lower-

class laymen was inevitable : *Bhakti* or adoration would secure and strengthen the personal ties on which feudal relations of production economically and ideologically survived.

Rammohun Roy's religious utilitarianism is more evident from his refusal to accept *mayabad* as final at least to the extent of social practice and moral code. He observed : 'Nor will youths be fitted to be better members of the society by the Vedanta doctrines which teach them believe, that all visible things have no real existence, that as father, brother, etc., have no actual entity, they consequently deserve no affection and therefore the sooner we escape from them and leave the world, the better.'[148] The feudal moral of loyalty to all relations and servile obedience to persons of higher social status or immediate superiors moulded him to negate an anarchical behaviour latent in the Vedanta doctrine. His love for Christian morality[149] owed to this backward linkage. In comparison to Bentham, whose utilitarianism was a bourgeoisie solution to harmonise the antagonistic relations of labour and capital, Rammohun Roy's utilitarianism was derived from his feudal and higher caste linkage, and a sincere effort to negate the tensions within a colonial regime to the ultimate interests of the British Empire. The Bengali *reformer* understood the logic of Bentham when he applied his *model* in a colonial environment. The principles of *utility* and *ideological illusions* were astutely balanced.

When Rammohun Roy committed himself to the existence of an *incomprehensible* Supreme Being, his retreat from *Tuhfut* was complete. The kernel of all his songs composed for the Brahma Sabha negated the importance of *reason* as a logical category.[150] He quoted Vyasa to prove the existence of the Supreme Being 'by his effects and works, without attempting to define his essence.'[151] He stretched his irrationalism to the extent of saying : 'the Supreme Ruler bestows the consequences of . . . sins and holiness . . . by giving them other bodies either animate or inanimate,'[152] which amounted to the acceptance of the sacredness of caste and the Brahmanical nuisance of the theory of *karma* as the penultimate cause in determining caste stratification.

The ideological illusion which he created was given a concerte shape through the Brahma Samaj,[153] founded in 1830. The disciplines and practices of the Samaj revealed ! yet another retreat from *Tuhfut*. In 1803-04, he had criticised the role of all intermediaries

between man and got as 'deceptors'. Also, in the *Abridgement of Vedanta*, this thesis was retained : the Brahmans are people 'whose prejudices are strong, and whose temporal advantage depends upon the present system.'[154] But, in the Brahma Samaj, two Telegu-Brahmins, considered to be most orthodox in their adherence to customs, were bestowed with the patent right to recite the Vedas in a side-room screened from the view of the congregation, where non-Brahmins would not be admitted.[155] On the opening day of the Samaj, the Brahmins who were present received gifts in money to a considerable extent after the prayers and singing of hymns were completed.[156] The utility and sacredness of the intermediaries were tacitly admitted.

The object of the Brahma Samaj was to elevate the people from the thraldom of superstition and idolatry, but it failed miserably. First, the activities of the Brahma Samaj were narrowly limited to the city of Calcutta. No attempt was made to set up branches in the rural areas. Secondly, even in the city, it was evident that Muslims and Christians would not come to offer their prayers. Thirdly, the orthodox upper caste Hindus, who were bound to polytheism, were not invited. The Sabha had restricted the audience of Vedic recital only to the Brahmans. The so-called 'orthodox' were throughly antagonistic to the proceedings of the Sabha.[157] In this respect, thus the *reformer* had failed to mobilize the 'neo-feudals' under one roof. Lastly, the lower-castes in Calcutta were not welcomed to listen to the abstract ideas.

Theoretically however, Rommohun Roy insisted that the Sabha's sole object was to raise the ideas of the people 'from groveling objects, which only appeal to the senses, to those which are of a mental nature.'[158] Had there been any need to maintain this theoretical posture ?

A British observer noted : 'The great majority of the community are attached to the popular ceremonies considering them as at least leading to the knowledge of God, or as laying in a stock of merit which will influence their condition in this or a future birth.'[159] Truly, polytheism was the popular religious practice,[160] because, in the existing social organisation there was no other way left to the people. The fundamental arguments of some of the popular religious sects of Bengal were : belief in one God, and the realisation of greatest happiness in the fulfilment of all desires in this material world. The Balaramis ridiculed idolatry; the Ramballavis

denounced caste; the Saheb Dhanis worshipped no images, nor was caste a bar to them; and the Kartabhajas, as Gopal Krishna Pal reported, were 'a man-worshipping sect, and its object is to call forth and develop the latent divinity in man. This it seeks to accomplish, not by renouncing the world but by going through life's struggles manfully and heroically, sustained throughout with love for mankind and reverence for nature.'[161] Rammohun's desire of elevating human consciousness to that abstract level of unity with the Supreme Being was an illusory technique to divert the people from their principle of desire, fulfilment of which they craved for in this material world : a logic which nourished in itself the seeds of antagonism. To the *reformer*, the behaviour of Vaishnav sects and the mainstream of Vaishnav cult were immoral and corrupt.[162]

To sum up, Rammohun Roy's religious thinking should be seen in the perspective of his total outlook, and not as isolated abstract formulations. His theoretical arguments were politically motivated : to unite the 'neo-feudal' class, and develop the utilitarian principle of obedience and adoration among individuals and between classes in order to create a perfect social harmony. In practice, however, he could not adhere to his own arguments and consequently failed to realise his objective.

VII. SOCIAL REFORMS OF RAMMOHUN ROY

Rammohun Roy had laid the foundation of all the principal modern movements for the elevation of our people',[163] and was considered the pioneer and the brain behind the ultimate abolition of *satidaha*.[164] These views demand closer scrutiny.

Scrafton wrote that in mid-18th century Bengal, the practice of *sati* was far from common and was only complied with by illustrious family.[165] Stavorinus noted its prevalence only among 'some castes.'[166] Possibly, some smaller castes, which were then emerging as influential castes in certain localities, were imitating the customs of the higher castes.

The Serampore missionaries were pioneers in the agitation against *satidaha*. William Carey had appealed to Lord Welesley and worked in collaboration with Dr. Buchanan to stop the practice. Government interference—regulations 1812, 1813 and 1817—and the impact of missionary work had produced some results. The incidence of *satidaha* had been on decline since 1818;[167]

a year which significantly coincided with Rammohun Roy's first assault on the practice of *satidaha*. His first book appeared in November 1818. The proceedings of the Nizamut Adalat dated 21 May 1819, admitted that *satidahas* in small numbers were taking place in youth or even at an age.[168] G. Forbes, the First Judge of the Calcutta Court of Circuit, and C. Smith, the Second Judge of the Nizamut Adalat, pleaded in 1819 and 1821 respectively for the immediate abolition of *satidaha* and affirmed that such abolition would not generate troubles.[169] Harrington, the Chief Judge of the Nizamut Adalat, observed in his minute of 28 June 1823 that the immediate abolition of *satidaha* would not generate political unrest.[170]

On December 1829, by Regulation XVII, *satidaha* was declared 'illegal and punishable by the Criminal Courts.' The tide of opinion was so strongly against the practice that any Governor-General would have acted as Bentinck did.[171] The *Bengal Hurkaru* had rejected the pioneering role of Rammohun Roy in ultimate abolition of *satidaha*.[172] Bentinck's minute on *sati* throws further light on the actual role of Rammohun Roy :

> "It was his (Rammohun's) opinion that the practice might be suppressed quietly and unobservedly, by increasing the difficulties, and by the indirect agency of the police. He apprehended that any public enactment would give rise to general apprehension, that the reasoning would be, 'while the English were contending for power they duped it politic to allow universal toleration, and to respect our religion; but having obtained the supremacy, their first act is a violation of their professions, and the next will probably be, like the Mahommedan conquerors, to force upon us their own religion."[173]

In Jessore, the practice had completely declined between 1824 and 1828, which owed to the power of law exercised by the acting magistrate against which no public remonstrance was made.[174] According to Charles Metcalfe, there was really no fear of unrest.[175] In fact, the only opposition was, a petition from the orthodox Hindu on 19 December 1829.[176]

Rammohun Roy's fear was imaginary, but his pious wish to abolish the practice cannot be doubted. However, the mind of the reformer has to be understood in the light of the above perspective.

The practice of *salidaha* was associated with the degenerated social practices of a corrupt Brahminism which hardly touched the fringe of lower castes. Moreover, it has been correctly argued that both Rammohun and Vidyasagar came from Radi Kulina caste and their social reforms were directed towards safeguarding the interest of the caste and enhancing their social and economic position. The strict laws of endogamy, prohibition of widow remarriage and polygamy had left their caste polluted and childless. The caste was losing its purity and declining in population. It is significant to note that members of Rammohun Roy's *Atmiya Sabha* belonged to Radi Kulina or Bhagna Kulina caste.[177] Secondly, the practice of *satidaha* was already declining when the *reformer* took up the cause. It would have declined independent of his interference. But, its absolute abolition would have been impossible without legal enactment, *i.e.*, an exterior force. Considered pragmatically, the *reformer's* apathy towards legal enactment is condemnable.

Rammohun Roy was not a champion of women's liberation. He had glorified ascetic widowhood[178] and made no serious attempt to educate the women. In this respect, Radhakanta Deb was more advanced in outlook.

An important cause of India's social stagnation was caste and the multifarious social taboos associated with it. The *reformer* had realised the problem,[179] but undertook no intellectual or practical action against it. Some authors argued that he had opposed caste and brought out a translation of an ancient text *Vajra-Suchi.*[180] Quite contrary, the argument of *Vajra-Suchi* provided a rational vindication of caste discipline.[181] In his *Brahma-Pauttalik Sanghad* (1820), the observance of caste, diet and associated social norms by the believer in Brahma was defended.[182] He wrote : "the Supreme Ruler bestows the consequences of . . . . sins and holiness . . . . by giving them other bodies either animate or inanimate."[183] This belief in the theory of *karma* is a traditional justification of caste. As such, he could not identify his interests with the Bengali Christians who were critical of caste.[184] Furthermore, in practice, Rammohun Roy wore his sacred Brahmin thread to the day of his death. His friend, Adam, wrote on 24 June 1827 : 'All the rules in the present state of Hindu society he finds it necessary to observe, relate to eating and drinking. He must not eat the food forbidden to Brahmins nor with persons of different religion from the Hindu or of different caste or tribe from his own.'[185]

Living in Calcutta and acquainted with the social practice of higher castes and moneocrats, Rammohun Roy never spoke a word against slavery extensively predominant in urban and rural Bengal.[186] He neither probed the causes, nor pleaded for adequate measures when the urban poor died in numbers owing to choked drainage, poor sanitary condition, lack of medical facilities and poor work conditions in the city.[187]

The picture, no doubt, reveals a reformer strongly averse to any radical social reforms that would elevate the people from perennial backwardness.

CONCLUSION

In late 18th and early 19th century Bengal, the objective of the British bourgeoisie was to establish its class hegemony in an alien society in collaboration with the 'neo-feudal' class, retaining to itself the position of dominance within the united front. The problem before this united front was the search for *effective means* to establish class hegemony. However, the processes of collaboration of the British bourgeoisie with the 'neo-feudal' class had created their own contradictions : within the 'neo-feudal' class and between the 'neo-feudal' class and the alien bourgeoisie. The first contradiction became sometime antagonistic, while in the second case it was always non-antagonistic. It is against this total perspective that a proper estimation of Rammohun Roy's ideas and works should have rested.

The greatness of the *reformer* lies in that he was one of the individuals of that period who could enlighten the British bourgeoisie by providing them with certain definite channels through which the dominance could be established. His essential philosophy was the philosophy of all reformers : the doctrine of class harmony. In a colonial environment, the doctrine of class harmony within the framework of the hegemony of an alien British bourgeoisie gave impetus to subsequent distortions in Indian economy, society and ideology. Furthermore, the ideology of social harmony concealed in itself the violence through which the alien rulers had attained dominance in society. The belief that association with an advanced country would elevate the Indians from backwardness and enlighten them in western science, technology and philosophy, was illusive and elusive, because the Indian reformers knew from experiences in

Combinedly, they have diffused the *illusions* needed to maintain the Raj. In a social structure which had not undergone any fundamental changes, the 'illusions' fostered by the Raj, and simultaneously carried forward by the enlightened intellectuals, survive till this day.

However, Rammohun Roy was the 'precursor of modern movements' in a limited sense. His methods of agitation—through petitions and appeals before a selective and an affluent audience—were imitated by the intellectual politicians of India during the early phase of the national movement. Such a method of political agitation was basically directed towards the maintenance of the colonial order with minor adjustments of power to the satisfaction of the higher class agitators. The greatest contribution of Rammohun Roy lies in his basically political idology of 'social harmony.' The political violence which stood by the *apparent* politics of social harmony of the then day is still the dominant *code of conduct* observed by the ruling classes to establish its hegemony in the society.

There were, nevertheless, in the Indian society other classes that had 'unconsciously' resisted the making of today's 'under-development.' The 'heroes' from these classes were even two decades back *unknown*. It is the task of historians to learn from present experiences, trace the sources of underdevelopment and find out *areas of sympathy* that ran counter to the process of strengthening British Imperialism in India.*

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44

RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY : THE FIRST LEADER OF MODERN INDIA

VERINDER GROVER*

Raja Rammohun Roy was a great Indian reformer and the father of Modern Indian Renaissance. He stood for the regeneration and uplift of India. He wanted the introduction of new ideas and ideals in order to raise this country to the height of civilization. He, therefore, actively championed the cause of social, religious, political, administrative and economic reforms. Therefore, he was reckoned as a great force during the early part of the 19th century and he naturally exercised great influence on the mind and thought of contemporary India. His writings deeply and profitably influenced the social, religious and political thinking of our countrymen.

Raja Rammohun Roy in his early years mastered many languages like Persian, Sanskrit and Arabic. At an early age his ideas took concrete shape and he used to write essays and tracts on idolatry, *Suttee* system, caste system, polygamy and also on issues related with political, administrative, judicial, educational and economic systems. At a very early age there arose differences between him and his parents because of his modern and enlightened ideas. These differences became so wide that he had to leave his home and went away to Tibet. In Tibet he spent three years and

*Former Reader, Deptt. of Political Science, and Managing Editor, *Indian Political Science Review*, University of Delhi, Delhi.

came to know about several superstitions of Buddhism. As a result, he was thoroughly disgusted there also. Because of his criticism of superstitious behaviour of Buddhists he had to face danger to his life. On his return to India he again went to Benaras and studied the Hindi scriptures. This intensive study cleared his many doubts on social and religious evils.

When Raja Rammohun Roy's father died in 1803, he, having joined a government job, went to Murshidabad. There he wrote his first work in Persian entitled *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin* in 1804. In this pamphlet he openly raised voice against idolatrous elements in all established religions.

After sometime Raja Rammohun Roy look up a job in the Revenue Department of the East India company and in his capacity as servant of the East India Company he had to remain at Bhagalpur, Ramgarh, Jaishore and some other places. In 1809, he joined as a *Dewan* to the Collector of Rangpur, where he came into contact with a large number of orthodox people who did not like him. Because he had advocated enlightened ideas and depricated social evils. Even his mother developed dislike for him. She called him an atheist and a heretic. She went to the extent of filing a suit against him for debarring him from the ancestral property.

SUTTEE

While at Rangpur Raja Rammohun Roy got interested in the political developments that were taking place in England and some parts of Europe. At that very time a tragic even took place in his family which created a painful impression on his mind and led him to initiate a crusade against the social evils prevailing in the Indian society at that time. His brother's wife became a *suttee*, at the death of her husband in 1811. This shocked the Raja and he started a relentless war against this evil.

The system of *suttee* was so much rooted in the socio-religious life of the Hindus during that period that people believed that in case a woman burnt herself on the pyre of her dead husband she could directly go to heaven. Raja Rammohun Roy tried to demolish the arguments advanced in favour of this cruel practice. His unparalleled knowledge of the Hindu Law also proved to be helpful in raising a banner of revolt against the practice of *Suttee*, In 1918, he filed a petition to the Governor-General of India

requesting him to stop this inhuman practice. He argued that although the practice had been sanctioned by some of the Hindu scriptures, a better course of life for a widow than self-immolation had also been prescribed by many Hindu scriptures of equal status. To support his arguments he published many books and pamphlets citing examples from various religious books including *Manusmriti.*

EQUAL STATUS FOR WOMEN

Raja Rammohun Roy was of the opinion that one of the main reasons for the prevalence of the system of *suttee* was the utter destitution to which women were reduced after the death of their husband as a widow was not entitled to any share in the ancestral property. Raja Rammohun Roy fought this issue and wanted that women should be given proper share in the ancestral property. In his books he quoted from the *Dayabhaga* and the *Mitakshara* laws and substantiated his argument that women should be given proper share in the ancestral property. What Raja Rammohun Roy fought for, nearly 150 years ago, has become a reality today and both daughters and sons have equal share in the ancestral property.

CASTE SYSTEM

Raja Rammohun Roy's basic approach was based on a synthesis between the East and the West. But the caste system bacame an obstacle in the path of such harmonization. This system had created barriers amongst individuals and hence it was a stumbling bloc in the path of individual development and social progress. He believed that social and political problems were closely interlinked and hence bitterly opposed the caste system. He was of the firm view that India's progress was slow because of the rigid caste system that kept man separate from man, sect from sect, province from province. He clearly visualised that with a rigid caste system national unity could not be achieved and political emancipation might remain distant. He considered caste to be one of the gravest ills that bedevilled the Indian society. To counter the caste system he established the *Brahmo Samaj* which aimed at spiritual democracy. Raja Rammohun Roy was of the firm opinion that India cannot progress until and unless the society is free from caste, creed and other socio-religious and political ills.

CHILD MARRIAGE AND POLYGAMY

Raja Rammohun Roy was also against child marriage and polygamy. The system of polygamy made the position of women very weak and pathetic. He pointed out in his writings that polygamy had been condemned even by the Indian sages. Moreover, he opined that apart from this, marrying more than once, was not in accordance with the Hindu Law.

INTER-CASTE AND WIDOW MARRIAGE

Raja Rammohun Roy was a great champion of inter-caste marriage and widow marriage. He was of the opinion that encouragement of the inter-caste marriage and widow marriage would uplift the position of women in society. It would also stop daughters and sisters being sold by their fathers and guardians. He strongly felt that introduction of inter-caste and widow marriages was bound to affect the system of *Suttee* and in course of time it might stop totally.

RELIGIOUS REFORMS

Raja Rammohun Roy was a champion of many religious reforms also. He was very much against orthodoxy. He attacked the sectarian and superstition elements that all religions were infected with. It is obvious that Raja Rammohun Roy developed a critical and rational outlook on religion. To him, religion was not a bundle of rituals and ceremonials, prejudices and superstitions; religion was not a blind adherence to tradition or the unquestioned subservient to authority. To him, morality and religion were inseparable. He clearly stated that true religion should consist of a belief in one God and a moral code calculated to maintain it.

Raja Rammohun Roy was strongly opposed to idolatry and considered it the root evil of the Hindu society. He started a constant campaign against idolatry and for this he published a number of books. In a pamphlet entitled *Humble Suggestions to my Countrsmen who Believe in one True God,* issued under a Pseudonym, he emphasised that God is one only and He would not be known either through the medium of language, thought or vision.

Raja Rammohun Roy was not a protagonist of any particular religion. In fact, he conceived of a religion which could be acceptable to all men and women and would be based on a belief in the supreme Being as the creator of universe together with a moral code meant to bring peace and happiness to mankind. Out of this conviction was born *Brahmo Samaj*. He laboured hard for the propogation of the precepts of *Brahmo-Samaj* that were the synthesis of all world religions.

POLITICAL THOUGHT

Raja Rammohun Roy was not only pioneer in the field of religious reforms. In fact, history of the spread of western knowledge and the beginning of political thought in modern India may be said to have begun with Raja Rammohun Roy. Because of this we call him the father of modern Indian Renaissance. It may not be wrong to say that the ideas spread and propagated by him greatly enriched the modern Indian political thought. Great western political thinkers like Montesque, Blackstone and Bentham had greatly influenced him.

Raja Rammohun Roy's interest in politics sprang from his love for liberty. It is said that his love for liberty was the main spring of all his activities—religious, social, political and economic. Being a lover of liberty he struggled hard for freedom of the Press. He was conscious that Press, as an important instrument of public opinion, must be free.

As Raja Rammohun Roy was a close student of political developments in Europe and America he was the pioneer to deliver the message of political freedom to India. For this he wanted to create self-confidence and self-consciousness in his countrymen. Going through his works it becomes clear that the Raja was convinced that freedom would come in India only when the people of this land were enlightened. For this, he even went to the extent of supporting the continuance of British Rule in India for some time and for the spread of western language. For holding these opinions it cannot be said that he was not a nationalist and did not stand for India's independence. Raja Rammohun Roy in fact was a true nationalist leader not only by intellectual affiliation with everything Indian but also by life long hard work he contributed to India's progress.

Raja Rammohun Roy wanted all-round development of India. Hence, as a nationalist he also took up the question of economic development by drawing the attention of the public towards economic drain. He was conscious that western presence on our soil had manifested itself in naked exploitation. Still he was in favour of European presence because his interest was to press into service European capital and technology for the economic development of India. But he was always against the monopoly in trade of the East India Company and its exploitations. That is why we say that Raja Rammohun Roy's nationalism was not of narrow type which could not see the good elements of the Europeans. It does not, however, mean that he took Indians to be inferior to Europeans. In fact, he also emphasised the superiority of Indian culture and civilization.

Raja Rammohun Roy was also a great internationalist. He wanted to improve the status of all downtrodden in the world. He keenly felt the need of an instrument for securing and granting political peace in the world. He was convinced that as in domestic life one was to seek help from neighbour so in national life one had to seek help from other nations. That is why he did not dislike the European presence on India soil though he was aware of its inherent limitations. As a result of this conviction he had visualised in some way, howsoever unconcrete it might have been, an idea of international organisation. He wanted that the disputes among the nations should be settled by such an organisation. We know that such an organization—UNO was established later—and how prophetic he was.

Raja Rammohun Roy was politically so conscious that he felt that the development of India could not be possible till people became conscious of their freedom and liberty and there occurred all-round development.

EDUCATION

It is doubtless that without a progressive system of education no nation can achieve desired progress. Because of this Raja Rammohun Roy emphasised that education should be first and the foremost necessity for modernising a society. During that time the policy of the East India Company was not to disturb the then existing system. But Raja Rammohun Roy wanted the adoption of

a new course. His driving passion in this regard was to free the spirit of man from the shackles of superstitions and ignorance. Hence, he wanted that system of India's education to be reoriented and readjusted. For this he wanted the introduction of rational and scientific educational system. Therefore, when the Government of the East India Company decided to establish a Sanskrit School under Hindu Pandits he opposed this decision. Instead he wanted the teaching of natural sciences—Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, etc. But his advocacy of the scientific system of education was generally misinterpreted, misrepresented and severely attacked by all those persons who upheld the traditional system of education. His intention in opposing the establishment of a Sanskrit School under Hindu Pandits was simply to emphasise that the girls and the boys of this country must be imparted education in scientific way.

Raja Rammohun Roy welcomed new ideas but did not discard the old ones as he believed in the coalescence of both Eastern and Western education and appreciated their individual merit. His educational pragmatism was the result of his deep and intensive study of the western civilization. Though his approach to education looks apparently contradictory, he always spoke in terms of genuine appreciation for good english and good science wedded to Indian culture.

It is obvious that Raja Rammohun Roy was a synthesis between the East and the West, between theory and practice, between science and culture and between the past and the future. The eastern culture and the western science together formed for him a whole which went to make up the totality of knowledge. It is beyond doubt that the western education got its way in India to his inspiration.

Raja Rammohun Roy was a great leader and was definitely a torch-bearer for modern India. Inspite of several limitations imposed by then prevailing circumstances on his role and action it may not be wrong to emphasise the sincerity of his intention, clarity of his thought, modernity of his philosophical ideas and broadness of his social vision. In fact, it was he who sowed the seeds of future Indian nationalism and in this respect he definitely stood far above his contemporaries.

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